DOC academy pushed back. PAGE 2
NMC remembers fallen Proa. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 9

www.saipantribune.com FRIDAY JANUARY 12, 2024 www.facebook.com/saipantribune

Palacios

'2024 brings great promise'

- Tax Collection Task Force recovering $8M so far
- $24M FEMA reimbursements anticipated in coming months
- $15M MPLT line of credit key in facilitating infrastructure projects
- MVA projects a 36% increase in overall arrivals in FY 2024

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With more federal and local dollars expected to boost the CNMI's coffers and continued efforts to revive the tourism industry, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios is optimistic that things are looking good for the Commonwealth in 2024.

In his Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report submitted to the Legislature on Monday, Palacios disclosed that the Tax Collection Task Force he

See PROMISE on Page 4

Victim in Finasisu homicide sued DPS for police brutality

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The plot thickens in the homicide case of Jin Dong Wang and Shuping "Lily" Liu after it came to light that Wang had previously sued the Department of Public Safety for $100,000, alleging police brutality.

Wang, one of the two individuals who were found brutally killed last Jan. 4 at their home in Finasisu, was also the plaintiff in a police brutality case filed over 10 years ago.

It was learned during an interview with DPS last Tuesday that one of the findings of

See VICTIM on Page 4

IPI license hangs in the balance on Jan. 31

Demapan

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With the Commonwealth Casino Commission finally cleared to proceed with its casino license revocation hearing, board vice chair Rafael Demapan has directed Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC to appear before the CCC when it resumes the hearing on Jan. 31, 2024.

In an order Monday, a copy of which was obtained by *Saipan Tribune* yesterday, Demapan requested IPI to appear before the CCC at the

See IPI on Page 4

MHS principal addresses rumors

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Marianas High School principal Jonathan Aguon addressed rumors of alleged misconduct involving a faculty member in an email to parents yesterday evening.

Aguon said the MHS administration is aware of the rumors and takes "such matters very seriously, and the safety and well-being of our students are our top priorities."

This is a developing story and no further details were released, but social media posts yesterday allege that the MHS teacher had "inappropriate conduct" with a student. There was no immediate word on the identity of the MHS teacher who is allegedly involved.

In his email message to parents, Aguon assures that the "appropriate authorities" have been contacted and that "additionally, appropriate

See MHS on Page 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The Marianas High School campus in Susupe.

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Tupu Cane Juice finally has its own brick-and-mortar store with the opening of its location at Paseo de Marianas last Dec. 27.
PAGE 14

NATION
Marching ahead with multiple impeachment plans, House Republicans set their sights Wednesday on Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.
PAGE 15

WORLD
Ukraine has shown the world that Russia's military can be stopped, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday as he began a visit to the Baltic nations in search of more help.
PAGE 16

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Buy One,
Get One
$1 for
Big Mac®
10 pc. Chicken McNuggets®
Quarter Pounder® w/ Cheese
Filet-O-Fish®
Store Hours
Chalan Pale Arnold Road
Open Daily for Dine-In & Drive-Thru
6 AM - 10 PM | (670) 235-8577
Garapan Express
Open Daily for Dine-In & Drive-Thru
24 Hours | (670) 233-8577
Discount applied to equal or lesser priced product. Offer applies to ala carte only.
Cannot be combined with any other offer or combo. Served after 10:30 am. Limited Time.
©2024 McDonald's

Local

DOC academy pushed back

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Corrections academy, which was supposed to begin next month, has been tentatively rescheduled for March.

Torres

DOC Commissioner Anthony Torres said in an interview that DOC's next scheduled academy is still in the works and may now be launched sometime around March.

"Theres no update on training right now. We're still meeting with the Workforce Investment Agency in the next week or so. We were shooting for a target date of Feb. 25 [but] we might have to move it to March. As soon as we get more updates, we will release [more information]," he said.

In a previous interview with Torres, he said he will be looking for the Commonwealth's finest young men and women to be part of the upcoming correctional academy, which will be the 10th cycle of the academy.

DOC currently has about

See DOC on Page 4

HANA
HEALTH MASSAGE
SERVICES OFFERED
▪ Body Oil Massage ▪ Foot Massage (with medicine) ▪ Cupping Therapy (Suction cup massage for back pain) ▪ Sauna ($25 for 2 person)
▪ SPECIAL PROMO ▪ 1 Hour Body Massage $20
Recommended to heal: Back pain, neck pain, insomia, shoulder pain and head pain
Locations: ▪ NEW location → San Antonio, across K Market next to Ranch BBQ
▪ MSV Building, Chalan Kanoa across Moonlight
10:00AM TO 12:00AM • Call HANA: (670) 789-7778
WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS

HONDA
2023 MODEL
CLEARANCE
SALE
$1000 JOETEN SHOPPING SPREE
with purchase of any new or used car
PARTICIPATING STORES
Starting at
$179* per paycheck
2023 Honda Civic Sport
LX/SPORT/EX TRIMS AVAILABLE
Starting at
$193* per paycheck
2023 Honda HR-V Sport
LX/SPORT TRIMS AVAILABLE
Visit us at www.joetenmotors.com • Tel. (670) 234-5562
FREE TINT AND ZIEBART UNDERCOATING | 1 YEAR FREE SERVICE
Joeten Motors
POWERED BY YOU
SHOWROOM HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 8AM - 5PM • SATURDAY 8AM - 12PM
Like us on Facebook
*Some conditions apply, O.A.C., See dealer for details. Vehicle may not be exactly as shown.
*2023 Honda Civic LX at $28.695 + Doc Fees with 20% down at 6% APR for 72 Months at 26 pay periods per year O.A.C. Deferred financing $20,782.80 while supplies last.
**2023 Honda HR-V at $30,995 + Doc Fees with 20% down at 6% APR for 72 Months at 26 pay periods per year O.A.C. Deferred financing $29,987.28 while supplies last.

NMC remembers fallen Proa

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Following the revelation of the identities of the victims in the Finasisu murders, it was determined that one of the victims, Shuping "Lily" Liu, was a student of the Northern Marianas College. NMC has since planned a moment of silence in honor of their fallen fellow Proa.

Saipan Tribune learned that Northern Marianas College president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero sent out a mass email last Wednesday to all Proas regarding the recent loss of Liu.

Saipan Tribune learned Liu has been taking classes at NMC in addition to serving as an English teacher for a local private school.

In his email, Deleon Guerrero asked that a moment of silence be observed in honor of Liu's memory.

"I ask our Proa tribe to take some time to observe a moment of silence to honor the memory of our fellow Proa and the others that are involved in this senseless tragedy," said Deleon Guerrero.

The NMC president also stated that NMC counselor and administrators will be working with the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. to offer counseling to students and employees who may need it.

"In the aftermath of this heartbreaking incident, our counsellors and administrators will be working closely with the CHCC Community Guidance Center to offer counselling services to students and employees who may need access to them. I urge students to reach out to advisors or counsellors if you need help, guidance, or just someone to talk to. We are here to help and support each other during this difficult time. And let us continue to keep the families of our fellow Proa in our thoughts and prayers," he said.

The investigation into the Finasisu murders continues with the Department of Public Safety's Criminal Investigation Bureau weeding through persons of interests they have recently identified.

During a press conference last week, DPS spokesperson Fred Sato said that 911 received a call last Thursday morning from a woman who stated that there might be injured people in an apartment in Finasisu. It was later determined that the female caller is a colleague of Liu. Both are teachers at a local private school.

The woman reportedly told police that Liu had not reported for work, so she went to their residence to do a welfare check and panicked at the sight of blood when she looked through one of the home's windows, so she immediately looked for help.

At the scene and immediately upon entering the home, police found traces of blood leading into one of the bedrooms, Sato said. Upon entering the bedroom, police immediately saw Jingdong Wang lying on the floor in a pool of blood, with Liu lying nearby and whose face was also covered in blood.

It was also recently learned that police had received a call from Wang and Liu stating that their home had been broken into. This happened two weeks prior to the gruesome killing. DPS continues to investigate whether this is tied to the murders.

DPS has also ruled out domestic violence and continues to investigate whether the killing was random or premeditated.

DPS continues to ask for the public's help and to say something if they hear or see anything.

About 20 men and women from the DPS Criminal Investigation Bureau are currently working on the case with help from federal partners.

Manibusan: Solid Waste Revolving Fund bill would greatly benefit DPW's efforts

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Attorney General Edward Manibusan informed the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs yesterday that there are no apparent legal impediments to the passage of a bill that seeks to allocate 10% of excise taxes to the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund.

Manibusan

Manibusan told Sen. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), who chairs the Senate Committee on Fiscal Affairs, that House Bill 23-26 would greatly benefit the Department of Public Works in its efforts to manage solid waste for the CNMI.

Introduced by Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan) on March 9, 2023, House Bill 23-26 proposes to amend the Commonwealth Code to reinstate and allocate 10% of excise taxes from the current 7% for the Solid Waste Management Program and deposited into the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund to be expended by the DPW secretary. The House subsequently passed the bill and forwarded it to the Senate for action. It was Manglona who asked the Office of the Attorney General for comments on the legislation.

Manibusan said the bill is consistent with the legislative intent of Public Law 13-42 that established the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund.

He said the proposed bill will support DPW's mission to operate the Marpi Landfill in compliance with CNMI and federal regulations, including permit compliance requirements.

This allocation was previously repealed or suspended, Manibusan said, to the detriment of the DPW in the area of solid waste management.

It was determined back in 2002 that the funding required to cover all aspects of solid waste management within the CNMI would require approximately $3.8 million per annum.

House Bill 23-26 will reinstate the funding and raise it to 10% of excise taxes. The House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee deemed it critical and necessary to ensure that serious health, safety, and environmental consequences are avoided through adequate funding of the Marpi Landfill to ensure its sustainability.

The Marpi Landfill, a 26-acre waste management facility with six cells of two and a half million cubic yards of airspace, began operating in 2002.

The Ways and Means Committee said a feasibility study showed that 28% of the facility's space has been exhausted as of February 2019, and cells 1 and 2's lifespan was approximately six years, down to about four years by now, or around 2025.

Deleon Guerrero makes it to UH Manoa Dean's List

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Anthony Jacob "Jakey" Camacho Deleon Guerrero has been named to the University of Hawaii at Manoa's fall 2023 Dean's List.

HONOLULU, Hawaii—Anthony Jacob "Jakey" Camacho Deleon Guerrero, a recent Marianas High School graduate (May 2023) and seasoned competitive CNMI National Swimmer of Saipan majoring in Civil Engineering, has been named to the University of Hawaii at Manoa's fall 2023 Dean's List. The fall semester runs from August to December.

Full-time undergraduate students are awarded the Dean's List distinction when they earn a semester grade point average of 3.5 or higher. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits or more over a 16-week semester grouped in fall, spring, and summer.

Established in 1907, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is the largest and oldest of the 10 UH campuses. Mānoa offers hundreds of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees; a strong, vital research program; and nationally ranked NCAA Division I athletics. UH Mānoa is a research university of international standing.

It has widely recognized strengths in tropical agriculture, tropical medicine, oceanography, astronomy, electrical engineering, volcanology, evolutionary biology, comparative philosophy, comparative religion, Hawaiian studies, Pacific Islands studies, Asian studies, and Pacific and Asian regional public health. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Anthony Jacob "Jakey" Camacho Deleon Guerrero, a seasoned competitive CNMI National Swimmer of Saipan, is majoring in Civil Engineering.

ARMATECH

Wireless WIFI Antenna Installer and Repairer
Tel: (670) 234-8895 I Email: armatech.saipan@gmail.com
Mobile: (670) 287-5525 / (670) 783-8895

The most common identification of a leak is SMELL.
If you smell gas, there is a possibility of a fire or explosion.
If the odor is STRONG:
1. Shut off gas if possible
2. DO NOT light matches or cigarettes
3. DO NOT operate switches or electrical appliances
4. Get everyone out of the building
5. Call the Fire Department from a neighbor's phone
6. Call Wushin LPGas Emergency Number

LP GAS WUSHIN
Since1983 Committed to Safety Excellence
For your LPGas needs, please call 322-7415 or 322-8733
Open from 8:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday | 8:00am – 2:00pm Saturday

Toys & Clothes
for children ages 0 to 10
LOLLIPOPS
BEACH RD., GARAPAN
Monday - Saturday: 9am - 7pm
Sunday: 10am - 4pm
TEL. 234-8040
Like us on Facebook

a boutique for Tween Girls ages 8-12
Dresses, Tees, skirts, jeans, shorts, and Accessories!
Girl Talk
TownHouse in Chalan Kanoa
Mon-Sat: 11am to 7pm
Sun: 10am to 4pm
TEL. 233-8050
Like us on Facebook

NMC, JKPL honor centennial legacy of Joeten Tenorio

As 2023 came to a close, Northern Marianas College and the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, alongside the family, friends, and local dignitaries, came together to pay tribute to the legacy of Jose C. "Joeten" Tenorio, who is recognized as one of the CNMI's pioneering entrepreneurs. The occasion served as a tribute to Tenorio's countless contributions to the Commonwealth.

"On behalf of the college, we thank the Joeten family for their continued work in our community. Growing up, all of us had memories of the Joeten store, and it is a testament to the visionary entrepreneurship of Jose C. Tenorio," said NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero.

NMC

The Northern Marianas College and Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, local dignitaries, and the Joeten family pose for a group photo with the unveiled portrait of the late Jose C. "Joeten" Tenorio.

"We honor the centennial legacy of Jose 'Joeten' Camacho Tenorio, a trailblazing entrepreneur whose vision and dedication continue to transform the landscape of the Marianas," said JKPL director Erlinda C. Naputi. "His pioneering spirit and commitment to innovation laid the foundation for generations of local entrepreneurs to follow. His legacy continues to inspire and empower our community. On behalf of the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, we humbly thank the Joeten family for their continued support and patronage, as we continue to honor Joeten's memory in the establishment that bears his name."

In the ceremony, NMC and JKPL presented a plaque of appreciation to the Joeten family. Highlighting his humble beginnings as a post-World War II entrepreneur, turning a small grocery store into a multi-million dollar company with many businesses still operational in the present, and contributing to the local workforce.

The Joeten family also donated photos of the late Jose C. Tenorio to the CNMI archives. NMC extends its gratitude for entrusting this collection of records to the archives, where they will be cataloged, archived, added to the collection, and dutifully preserved. Community members will now be able to use these photographs for their research or leisure purposes.

"Mr. Tenorio was one of the first entrepreneurial juggernauts in the CNMI. He provided opportunities to the local CNMI workforce," said CNMI archivist and NMC adjunct instructor Raymond Muna. "Joeten's legacy continues to remain strong in the CNMI despite many challenges our community has faced throughout our history. His children and grandchildren continue to preserve and continue his entrepreneurial legacy to the CNMI community." ***(NMC)***

IPI

From page 1

Springs Plaza at 9am. The hearing will determine whether or not to revoke the exclusive casino license of the troubled casino operator.

Demapan said the hearing will be conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Administrative Procedures Act and the CCC Rules and Regulations.

He said a decision will be issued at the end of the hearing.

Demapan said the purpose of the hearing is to afford the parties an opportunity to present their case and submit information for the commission's consideration before the commission issues an order or decision on the matter.

This comes soon after the U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari to IPI last Jan. 9, 2024, leaving in place a U.S. Ninth Circuit ruling that allows the CCC to continue its revocation proceedings against IPI's casino license.

Last Dec. 13, CCC executive director Andrew Yeom moved the commission to issue an order setting a revocation hearing on Yeom's two complaints against IPI. The CCC board granted Yeom's motion during a meeting last Dec. 28.

CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero earlier stated that the revocation is in reference to the CCC's enforcement actions 2021-002 and 003 against IPI, which went into the Superior Court and CNMI Supreme Court.

"That basically is what we're pursuing now for the revocation. They need to comply with that. That's been fully litigated," the DeLeon Guerrero said.

He said there was an order that came out of the CCC board and it has to do with the non-payment of license fee, regulatory fee, three months reserved for payroll, and payments IPI owes its vendors that are uncontested.

DeLeon Guerrero said those matters have already been litigated and that they are not going to relitigate it.

IPI failed to pay some $62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government by the Dec. 30, 2023 deadline.

PROMISE

From page 1

created last July has been executing installment agreements and recovering approximately $8 million.

Also, his administration expects more than $24 million in disaster-related reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the coming months. Palacios said this will be key in reducing the government's outstanding deficit and facilitating payments that are owed vendors.

As for key infrastructure projects slated for 2024, Palacios said the $15-million revolving line of credit from the Marianas Public Land Trust, as authorized by the Legislature in Public Law 23-12, will be critical.

On top of that, with ongoing efforts to revive and expand the tourism industry and open new markets, the Marianas Visitors Authority projects a 36% increase in overall visitor arrivals in fiscal year 2024 compared to fiscal year 2023.

Palacios said they are hopeful that revenue-generating bills now making their way through the Legislature will be passed and sent to his desk for approval this year, providing additional, much-needed fiscal stability for critical operations and services.

"Though not without challenges, the new year brings great promise for the Commonwealth, and we have much to look forward to," Palacios said.

The governor said that they made significant strides in fiscal year 2023 in improving government collections through the efforts of the Tax Collection Task Force. Since launching the task force in July 2023, the Department of Finance has brought 226 taxpayers into compliance and raked in $8 million additional taxes. The task force is mandated to aggressively collect taxes owed in the past 10 years.

Palacios said the task force's efforts will continue in fiscal year 2024, and that they expect further improvements in taxpayer compliance and government collections in the months ahead.

In July 2023, Finance Secretary Tracy B. Babauta disclosed to the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee that Finance has $121.4 million in total outstanding collectibles from the past 10 years, including $30 million in employee quarterly withholdings that were not remitted by employers.

In addition to continuing improvement in government collections and increased tourism arrivals, Palacios said they look forward to the economic stimulus and infusion of new revenue that federally funded projects will bring in the new year.

This includes new construction, road projects, expanded internet access, and climate action initiatives made possible through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

Anticipating continued improvements in tourism arrivals, Palacios said that, according to MVA, the Commonwealth expects a 35% growth in arrivals from CNMI's top market, Korea, in fiscal year 2024, compared to fiscal year 2023's 214,553 visitors.

He said they also expect an estimated 11,000 visitors from Japan in fiscal year 2024—a 49% increase compared to fiscal year 2023.

The governor said they also anticipate direct flights from Hong Kong to Saipan to begin in early 2024, and project an estimated 14,336 visitors from that market.

The CNMI ended fiscal year 2023 with an estimated $4.1 million deficit, arising from a revenue shortfall of $313,310 and over-expenditure amounting to $3.8 million.

MHS

From page 1

administrative actions are being taken to address the matter. We understand the concerns and anxieties that such rumors can generate, and we want to emphasize our commitment to ensuring a safe learning environment for our students. Concurrently, we are focused on safeguarding our students to maintain uninterrupted access to their education and support their continued academic progress."

He said the school is dedicated to providing a safe learning environment and is working to maintain the trust and integrity of the community.

He requests the community's understanding and support and encourages everyone to seek support and avoid rumor-spreading, "as it can have negative effects on those directly involved and our entire school community."

"We seek the understanding of the community, keeping in mind that the spread of rumors and misinformation can have negative consequences, especially for any student impacted in such cases," said Aguon

At press time, Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence Camacho has not replied to inquiries by *Saipan Tribune*.

VICTIM

From page 1

the investigation into Wang's murder was that he is known to police as he was involved in a drug bust in 2010.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Wang fell victim to a case of false identity when he was mistaken for a known drug supplier and was allegedly forcefully arrested by former police officer Jesse Dubrall. That led to Wang filing a $100,000 lawsuit against DPS and Dubrall back in 2011. He was represented in the case by lawyer Robert J. O'Connor. Wang sued Dubrall for assault and battery, false arrest, emotional distress, violation of civil rights, and negligence. He sued DPS and former DPS commissioner Santiago Tudela for negligence and violation of civil rights.

The case never made it to trial as it was learned that DPS settled with Wang over a year later, ultimately leading to the dismissal of the complaint.

Aside from his history with police, DPS also disclosed during last Tuesday's interview that Wang and Liu had called police for assistance two weeks prior to the murder to report a break-in. DPS did not provide updates on the break-in but stated that investigators are looking at the report as a possible angle in the gruesome killings.

In the mistaken identity incident in 2010, Wang had reportedly gone outside his apartment in As Lito at 8pm on Oct. 18, 2010, to go to another apartment unit. That's when he saw two individuals on the first floor of the apartment shining a flashlight up at him.

One of the two men came up. Wang claims he did not know who they were, but he thought that the man with a gun, later identified as Dubrall, was a policeman.

The complaint said Dubrall allegedly told Wang to get down, prompting Wang to stop walking. Wang claims that Dubrall, without provocation, hit him on the head with the gun's butt and kicked him in the ribs and buttocks several times.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

DOC

From page 2

110 Corrections officers and Torres said he would be comfortable with an additional 25.

"Ideally, I would like to have a total of 150 officers. I would love to pick up about 30 to 40 cadets, but due to budget constraints…I'm okay with an additional 25. I'm looking to get us beefed up in our staffing and to get this going," he said.

Torres, with his vast knowledge and experience in Corrections, will take part in the academy.

"I'm going to be a part of this academy, whether it being an instructor or going out and observing. I'm excited because it's an opportunity for jobs, to build our staff, and it's an opportunity to be a part of the training. We will be working with the Northern Marianas College," he said.

BICYCLES, TRICYCLES & SCOOTERS

20% off

COMFORTERS

20% off

DRAPES & WINDOW CURTAINS

20% off

ELECTRONICS

20% off

KITCHEN GADGETS

20% off

HANDBAGS & WALLETS

20% off

PARTY SUPPLIES

20% off

MENS SHIRTS & SHORTS

20% off

LADIES DRESSES & BLOUSES

20% off

BOYS SHIRTS & PANTS

20% off

GIRLS DRESSES

20% off

OFFICE & SCHOOL SUPPLIES

20% off

SHOES & SANDALS

20% off

WATCHES

20% off

WICKER BASKETS

20% off

JOETEN 4-DAY MLK WEEKEND SALE

FRIDAY TO MONDAY, JANUARY 12 TO 15, 2024

US GROUND BEEF CHUB 73% LEAN 1 LB

$4.49

US GROUND BEEF 10 LB TUBE

$29.99

US GROUND PORK 80% LEAN 1 LB

$3.49

HOFFY PORTUGUESE SAUSAGE 10oz

$2.99

WHOLE TILAPIA

$1.99 /lb.

ACE OF DIAMONDS TUNA 7oz

$1.89

SAPPORO ICHIBAN ORIGINAL RAMEN 24/3.5oz

$12.99 /cs.

DIAMOND G CALROSE RICE 25 LBS

$19.99

HAWAIIAN SUN DRINKS 12pk

$9.99

JOETEN BUTANE GAS 4pk

$24.99 /cs.

GROCERY/MARKET ITEMS

ASSORTED RAMUNE JAPANESE SODA

$1.29 ea.

SELECTED RAGU PASTA SAUCE 24z

$2.99

NUTELLA HAZELNUT SPREAD 13z

$4.99

CRISCO VEGETABLE OIL 40 FL OZ

$7.99

FOLGERS DECAF CLSSIC ROAST 25.9z

$15.99

LA FORTALEZA CORN TORTILLA 14z

2 FOR $5.99

U.S. POTATO RUSSETT/IDAHO ($)

99¢/lb.

U.S. LETTUCE ROMAINE HRT 3'S

$3.99

U.S. BROCCOLI BROWNS/LB

$2.39

COFFEEMATE CREAMER LIQUID 32z

$5.29

U.S. FROZEN BEEF OXTAILS SLICED

$5.75 /lb.

U.S. FROZEN BEEF SHORTRIBS THIN SLICED

$7.69 /lb.

U.S. FROZEN PORK SHOULDER STEAK TRAY

$2.89 /lb.

U.S. FROZEN PORK BELLY THIN SLICED TRAY

$3.99 /lb.

CHIPOYS CHILE LIMON 4z
CHIPOYS SPICY RANCH 4z
CHIPOYS FIRE RED HOT 4z
CHIPOYS FIRE ORIGINAL 4z

$1.35 ea.

CHIPOYS FIRE RED HOT 10z
CHIPOYS FIRE CHILE LIMON 10z
CHIPOYS FIRE SPICY RANCH 10z
CHIPOYS FIRE ORIGINAL 10z

$2.85 ea.

Joeten Shopping Center

Although Joeten strives to ensure that all pricing information on this ad is accurate, occasionally an error may occur and goods may be mispriced. We reserve the right to correct all typographical and pictorial errors.

P.O. Box 500137 Saipan, MP 96950 • Tel. 234-6446/48 • Fax. 234-5876
Visit our 4-Branches: Joeten Susupe, Garapan, Dandan and Kagman

AMERICAN EXPRESS VISA MasterCard JCB

WE WELCOME FOOD STAMPS.
WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIES

GUANGDONG HARDWARE
Never satisfied until you are
ON SALE
REGULAR US LUMBER, RED PLYFORM, "24X24" CERAMIC TILES, PVC S40 CONDUIT, PVC S80 WATER FITTINGS,
AVAILABLE NOW
SALE ITEMS!

Make a Difference for Your House!
NEW ARRIVALS!
CARPOLY PAINT
It's the suitable paint for the island climate.
Make your paint last for a long time!

1 FREE T-shirt with one time purchase of two buckets of
CARPOLY
Professional Paint Solution Provider
First Come First Served, While Stocks Last
LED LIGHTS
• Less money, 50% energy saving!
• More stable, bright, and fashionable!
• More longer and environmental protection!
Your Smart Choice!
G60 Rebar is Available Now!
CHEAPEST DEALER OF MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL ON ISLAND!
P.O. BOX 501640, SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 288-2288/2289/6688
FAX: 288-4488
E-mail:guangdong_hardware@163.com
BUSINESS HOURS:
Monday to Saturday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
DISCOVER MasterCard VISA

NMC nursing graduate passes NCLEX-RN

Katrina Valencia, a 2023 Northern Marianas College nursing graduate, recently passed the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses or NCLEX-RN.

Nursing graduates must pass the NCLEX-RN to be able to practice nursing in the United States and its territories. The exam tests the knowledge, skills, and abilities of nursing graduates in order to certify that they are capable of applying entry-level nursing practices correctly.

"We extend our warmest congratulations to Katrina for successfully passing the NCLEX-RN," NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero said. "This accomplishment is a testament to their commitment to excellence and the high standards upheld by NMC's nursing program.

NMC Nursing Department chair Rosa Aldan likewise congratulated Valencia on her achievement.

"We are immensely proud of Katrina's achievement and are confident that she will continue to excel in their career as a registered nurse," Aldan said. "NMC remains dedicated to nurturing the next generation of healthcare professionals in the CNMI."

Valencia

According to Valencia, she pursued nursing due to her passion for helping others.

"Growing up, I have always been there for my friends and my peers mentally and emotionally, giving them the best advice I could give and helping them in any way I can," Valencia said. "Nearing the end of my high school education, I wanted to do more and learn more, and that was when I realized that I wanted to help people physically as well. Going into nursing provides me many opportunities in learning how to care, educate, and advocate for others."

Valencia contributes her success with the exam to the College's nursing faculty, as well as her family and friends.

"Having the support from my family, friends, instructors, and my significant other really helped me push through while studying for the NCLEX," Valencia said. "All the NMC instructors have positively impacted my learning in their own way to help prepare me for the NCLEX. I am so grateful for all the encouragement and wisdom they have given us."

Valencia advises students who are preparing for the exam to have a balance between studying and taking care of their well-being.

"Most of the time we students put a lot of pressure on ourselves while studying for the NCLEX, so it is really important to believe and trust in yourself—to take a step back and remind yourself that you know the content and have been doing the work everyday," Valencia said.

Valencia is now working at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. as a registered nurse in the Medical-Surgical Unit.

For more information about NMC's nursing program, email Aldan at rosa.aldan@marianas.edu or call (670) 237-6744. ***(NMC)***

ANTONIO SN. BORJA, Chairman — JAMES M. MENDIOLA, Vice Chairman — HENRY H. SAN NICOLAS, Member — DONALD M. HOFSCHNEIDER, Member — CHARLENE M. LIZAMA, Executive Director

TINIAN CASINO GAMING CONTROL COMMISSION

Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9910(a), the Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission (TCGCC) hereby gives notice that it will hold its Regular Meeting, on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the TCGCC Conference Room.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY
a. Call to Order
b. Roll Call
c. Adoption of Agenda
d. Adoption of Minutes
1. December 22, 2023 – Regular Meeting

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

III. REPORTS
a. Chair's Report
b. Executive Director's Report

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
a. Status Update of Bridge Investment Group/Tinian Diamond Casino

V. NEW BUSINESS
a. Junket Application
b. ED Recommendation No. 2024-01

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

VII. OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

1 Public comments are limited to 30 minutes and each remark is limited to 3 minutes. Everyone is welcome to submit written comments.
2 Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Commission may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

J.J. Ogo Barcinas
P.O. Box 1056
Rota, MP 96951
(670)783-8349

PRO SE

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Change of Name of:	FCD CN CIVIL ACTION NO. 24-0011
J.J. Ogo Barcinas, Petitioner	**NOTICE OF HEARING**

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 26, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom Rota, before Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja.

Dated this 10th day of January, 2024.

Patrick Diaz
Clerk of Court
By: Deputy Clerk of Court

UOG to host free training on safe pesticide use in agriculture

Farmers and companies who use pesticides in agricultural settings are encouraged to attend a free training on worker safety when handling pesticides. It will be held from 5pm to 9pm on Jan. 17 and Jan. 18 through the Agriculture & Natural Resources program of University of Guam Cooperative Extension & Outreach.

Changes to the federal Worker Protection Standard focus on reducing exposure for those who handle and work in areas treated with pesticides. This training is the first to be held within a new three-year project titled Pesticide Safety Education for Pacific Island Educators and Stakeholders, funded through the University of Guam by Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education.

The train-the-trainer style course will educate participants on how to teach workers safe pesticide application, how to reduce their exposure, and how to ensure compliance with the Worker Protection Standard of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

It will also cover how to properly calibrate a sprayer, which is a common problem that can lead to misapplication of pesticides and significant costs to the growers, and how to increase the effectiveness of pesticides through water pH level.

Delivering the content will be agricultural health and safety consultant Kerry Richards out of Pennsylvania and George Hamilton, an emeritus fruit and vegetable extension specialist from the University of New Hampshire.

The Jan. 17 training will take place the Farmers' Cooperative Association of Guam located at the Route 1/Route 27A intersection in Dededo, and the Jan. 18 training will take place on the University of Guam campus, Room 124 of the Agriculture & Life Sciences Building.

Registration is free. Those interested can email Kat Perez to register at perezk10766@triton.uog.edu. ***(UOG)***

DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 • Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
TEL. NO. 664-8300 FAX NO. 664-8315 • www.dcrm.gov.mp

NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of January 12, 2024

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

NO.	APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1.	Thanks Saipan Corporation	12/18/2023 SPIm-2023-014	Dry-Dock	Lowerbase, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Approved* 01/05/2024
2.	Pacific Coastal Research & Planning	12/18/2023 SSPILR-2024-015	Salvage & Recovery (FV Charito Vessel)	Lowerbase, Saipan	Shoreline, Ports & Industrial, Lagoon & Reef	Stop Clock* 12/29/2023
3.	The Micronesian Telecommunications Corporation dba IT&E	12/19/2023 SSWPICH-2024-016	Fiber Optic/Copper Installation & Connection and Existing Telephone Cable Repair/Replacement	Island wide, Saipan	Shoreline, Wetlands & Mangrove, Ports & Industrial, Coastal Hazards	Certified Complete* 01/05/2024
4.	Department of Public Works (DPW)	12/29/2023 SSWm-2024-017	Island Wide Emergency Road Repair on Highway Route 310 and Route 38	Island Wide, Saipan	Shoreline, Wetlands & Mangrove	Application Under Review*
5.	H J 2 Corporation dba Marine World	12/29/2023 SLR-2024-018	Commercial Water Jet Craft & Banana Boat Operations	Susupe, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Approved* 01/09/2024
6.	Northern Marianas Technical Institute (NMTI)	01/04/2024 SPIm-2024-019	NMTech Roof Replacement	Lowerbase, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Approved* 01/10/2024
7.	H J 2 Corporation dba Marine World	01/05/2024 SSm-2024-020	Temporary Beach Concession	Susupe, Saipan	Shoreline	Approved* 01/11/2024
8.	Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA)	01/08/2024 SSPIm-2024-021 (Formerly SSPI-2019-X-022)	Repair & Upgrade at Berth 103 & Stormwater Management System	Lowerbase, Saipan	Shoreline, Ports & Industrial	Application Under Review
9.	Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA)	01/05/2024 TPIm-2024-002	Seaport Perimeter Fence Replacement	San Jose, Tinian	Ports & Industrial	Approved* 01/08/2024

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

Sanitary inspections of food establishments for Dec. 2023

During the month of December, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Environmental Health Disease Prevention conducted sanitary inspections on retail, eating, and drinking establishments.

Through this release, EHDP is providing names of establishments by inspection grade and names of establishments which were ordered to close for serious violations of health and sanitation standards. For these establishments, EHDP provides the suspension date and the date they were certified to resume operations.

Classifications for food safety rating for an establishment receiving a score of:

- 90-100 Grade A
- 80-89 Grade B
- 70-79 Grade C
- 69 closure/suspension

Results:

Grade A: Establishment

1. WJC Fish Mart, San Vicente
2. Chowtime, Garapan
   - Restaurant
   - Catering
3. New LQ Wholesales, As Lito
4. Café 670, Garapan
5. New Seaside Restaurant, Garapan
6. New Shin Restaurant, Garapan
7. Pearl River Wholesale, Chalan Laulau
8. Stay Café, Garapan
9. Gusto Products (Meat Manufacture), Fina Sisu
10. Subway & Foremost Scoops Restaurant, Gualo Rai.
11. Fork & Spoon Restaurant, Gualo Rai.
12. Kesy Wholesale, Gualo Rai
13. Bostonian, Chalan Laulau

/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Fork & Spoon: House of Sizzling recently received a Grade A food safety rating from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Environmental Health Disease Prevention.

   - Bakery
   - Retail
14. MJ Roadside Vendor, Chalan Kanoa.
15. Zubling Store, San Antonio.
16. Joeten Ace Hardware, Susupe
17. Joeten Ace Hardware, San Vicente
18. Joeten Ace Hardware, Gualo Rai
19. Lucky De Mart II, San Vicente
20. QF Wholesale, Gualo Rai
21. New LJ Catering, Gualo Rai
22. 99 Cents Supermarket, Garapan
    - Retail
    - Butcher & Packing Facility
    - Water & Ice Manufacture
23. New LC Market, Gualo Rai
    - Retail
    - Butcher & Packing Facility
24. LJ's I, Gualo Rai
    - Butcher & Packing Facility
25. Joeten Superstore, San Jose.
    - Retail
    - Wholesale
26. New Oleai Store, San Jose.
27. New Chun Ji Restaurant, Garapan.
28. LJ's II, Garapan
    - Retail
    - Butcher & Packing Facility.
29. Yong An Tofu Manufacture, Garapan.

Tinian

1. Cyber Pizza
2. 3H Catering
3. Bing's Specialty Catering

Grade B: Establishment

1. Joeten Superstore Restaurant, San Jose, Saipan.
2. Takumi, Restaurant, Garapan.
3. New XO Market, Gualo Rai
   - Wholesale ***(PR)***

GCC board of trustees meeting today

The Guam Community College board of trustees will hold its monthly board meeting today, Jan. 12, 2024 at 12pm at Guam Community College in Room 112, Learning Resource Center (GCC Library), Building 4000.

All attendees are encouraged to wear a mask on the GCC campus.

Individuals requiring special accommodations, auxiliary aids, or services should contact (671) 735-5641 ext. 5594/5597. ***(GCC)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-004

COMMONWEALTH DRIVE WATERLINE INSTALLATION PHASE I PROJECT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Commonwealth Drive Waterline Installation Project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of installation of new distribution line along Commonwealth Drive; connecting the new waterline to existing water mains; and installation of a new pressure reducing valve. The work is also inclusive of installation of new service laterals and water meters with individual pressure reducing valves, and relocation or reconnection of existing service laterals to new distribution line also with individual pressure reducing valve. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 270 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 23, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-004, Commonwealth Drive Waterline Installation Phase I Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 14, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at *manny.sablan@cucgov.org* with a copy to Mr. Aristotle Anicete, Project Engineer – via email at *aristotle.anicete@cucgov.org* and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at *christie.sablan@cucgov.org*

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-009

ROTA WATER CAVE ENCLOSURE/ REPLACEMENT OF WOOD STAIRS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs in Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists, in general, of the installation of a new 2-inch Sch. 40 G.I. Pipes Stairs and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Public Law 20-61.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **150 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 24, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-009, Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Comme cial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 13, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, Project Engineer – via email at edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Saipan-Tinian ferry available for Tinian Hot Pepper Festival

Getting to the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on Feb. 16-17, 2024, from Saipan just got easier with the addition of ferry service by the Marianas Visitors Authority.

Ferry round trip cost is $20 for ages 3-11, $50 for ages 12 and older. For one way, the cost is $15 for ages 3-11, $25 for ages 12 and older. Children ages 0-2 are free. Children under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult, and tickets are non-transferable. The ferry schedule will be:

■ Feb. 16, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 2pm

■ Feb. 17, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 2pm

■ Feb. 18, departing Saipan at at 8am and departing Tinian at 4pm

MVA

The 18th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival in March 2022 in San Jose, Tinian, in the Marianas. The 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival will be held on Feb. 16-17, 2024.

"We're pleased to announce the return of ferry service for those wanting to enjoy the Tinian Hot Pepper Festival this year," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "Everything is pointing to another spectacular President's Day weekend filled with food, fun, Tinian stunning nature, and the people's exceptional hospitality. Mark your calendars and come down for a day or a weekend!"

Docomo Pacific is the Exclusive Pika Sponsor of the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival.

The festival will kick off on the evening of Feb. 6 and continue on Feb. 17. The event will be held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, adjacent to the picturesque Jones Beach and House of Taga, a U.S. National Historic Landmark featuring limestone monoliths carved by ancient Chamorros.

Hotel accommodations are available at Tinian Ocean View, Tinian Diamond Hotel and Casino, Tinian Diamond Suites, Tinian Western Lodge Hotel, Lorilynn's Hotel, Tinian Street Motel, Fleming Hotel, Green Lion House Hotel, Lucky Homes Hotel, and the Marpo Valley Inn. Free camping is available at Jones Beach, Taga Beach (toilets, barbecue pits, and outdoor showers available) and at the adjacent Tachogna Beach (barbecue pits, outdoor showers, and toilets are available).

The *Super Emerald* ferry will depart from the Commonwealth Ports Authority dock in Lower Base, Saipan. Passengers must check in one hour before departure. Each paying customer is allowed one free checked bag and one additional checked bag for $20 for a combined total weight of up to 70 lbs. One household pet of up to 50 lbs is allowed per paying customer, and 35 passengers will be accommodated per ferry.

Advanced ticket purchase is required and will be accommodated on a first come, first served basis. Ticket purchases may be made at the MVA Office on Tinian or Saipan. Cash payments only will be accepted.

The festival, affectionately known as "Pika Fest" among locals ("pika" means spicy), pays homage to Tinian's small but famous "donne sali." Contests scheduled for the President's Day weekend event are the Hot Pepper Eating Contest, JC Cafe Hot Burger Eating Contest, the Estafao Pika (spicy chicken stew) Cooking Contest, a Cha-cha Dance Contest where contestants are encouraged/will be judged on wearing hot pepper-themed attire, and more.

The event is organized by the MVA in cooperation with the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan.

"I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone involved in organizing this milestone event, especially the MVA, the Tinian Mayor's Office, local culinary artisans, booth vendors, sponsors, and the dedicated volunteers," said Tinian Mayor Edwin Aldan. "Without their hard work and commitment, we wouldn't be able to celebrate the Tinian Hot Pepper Festival annually. Please mark your calendars for the dates of the festival, and together, let's celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Tinian Hot Pepper Festival. We look forward to seeing you at the festival grounds!"

For more information, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ray Villagomez at rvillagomez@mymarianas.com, Tinian Field Operations supervisor Vida Borja at vborja@mymarianas.com or (670) 433-9365, or the Tinian Mayor's Office at (670) 433-1802. ***(MVA)***

EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS

5.0-magnitude earthquake in NMI

At 08:44am on Jan. 11, 2024, a 5.0-magnitude earthquake occurred at the Northern Mariana Islands region. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

4.9-magnitude earthquake in San Jose Village

At 12:31am on Jan. 10, 2024, a 4.9-magnitude earthquake occurred at San Jose Village, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

SAIPAN HARBOR DREDGING PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-002-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Saipan Harbor Dredging Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-002-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office, by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, February 2, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their professional qualification statements, no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: January 9, 2024

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

CHARLIE DOCK EXTENSION PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-001-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Charlie Dock Extension Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-001-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, January 12, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: December 20, 2023

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NAME OF EMPLOYER: Marlyn P. Dougherty dba Mommyla Enterprises
THE POSITION: Beautician
NUMBER OF VACANCIES: 1
JOB DESCRIPTION: Provide beauty services such as: shampooing, cutting, coloring, and styling hair and massaging, and treating scalp; Apply makeup, dress wigs; Perform hair removal; and Provide nail and skin care services, such as manicures, pedicures, and various nail treatments
MINIMUM QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:
EDUCATION: Must be at least a High School graduate
EXPERIENCE: Must have at least 24 months of relevant work experience as a Beautician
OTHER SPECIAL SKILLS OR REQUIREMENTS: Must know details of hair care and treatment, make-up, nail and skin care services, and other aspects of beauty enhancement
JOB SITE: Bougainvillea Street, Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
HOW TO APPLY: If interested, please submit or mail application and comprehensive resume, with supporting credentials to:

MARLYN P. DOUGHERTY
Owner/Proprietor
or
DEBRALYN D. SANTOS
MOMMYLA ENTERPRISES
Office Address: Bougainvillea Street, Garapan
Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Mailing Address: PMB 1, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950
Email Address: mommyla01@hotmail.com
Telephone Number: (670) 788-0382

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
ONE (1) INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:
Set up equipment for employees use, performing or ensuring proper installation of cables, operating systems, or appropriate software; Develop training materials and procedures, or train users in the proper use of hardware or software; Assemble; install; configure and test computer and CCTV equipment or units of local area networks requiring the use of standard interface protocols; Refer major hardware or software problems or defective products to vendors or technicians for services; Maintain records of daily data communication transactions; problems and remedial actions taken, or installation activities; Answer user inquiries regarding computer software or hardware operation to resolve problems; Read technical manuals, confer with users, or conduct computer diagnostics to investigate and resolve problems or to provide technical assistance and support; Confer with staff, users and management to establish requirements for new systems or modifications; Ensure that new hardware or software systems or components integrate with existing network system; Modify and customize commercial programs for internal needs; Conduct office automation feasibility studies, including workflow analysis, space design, or cost comparison analysis; Oversee daily performance of computer systems; Analyze, test, troubleshoot and evaluate existing network systems, such as local area networks (LAN). Perform network maintenance to ensure networks operate correctly with minimal interruption; Configure and setup servers to work with various programs; install software to ensure server backups and network user backups are performed on a daily basis; Analyze network data to determine network usage, disk space availability, or server function; Fabricate cables for use in interfacing peripherals with computers, other peripherals and networks; Develop and maintain database setup of system software and hardware, install hubs and switches on the network, maintain networks and troubleshoot programs; Keep updated knowledge about emerging industry or technology trends; Perform other related duties as needed.

DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS:
- Bachelor's Degree in Computer Technology or similar field. Foreign equivalent is acceptable;
- 5 years' experience in computer network/information technology and must be knowledgeable with major hotel computer operating systems.

Interested individuals please send your resume with a list of references, photocopy of a valid photo identification card & updated police clearance to:

Dong Hwan Lee, Human Resource Director
Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort
4940 As Gonno Rd., Koblerville
P.O. Box 501160
Saipan, MP 96950
Contact no. 1 (670) 237-5051
E-mail: hr@coraloceansaipan.com

WE ARE AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

UOG breaks ground for Dr. Lucio Chua Tan Student Success Center

The University of Guam broke ground for the Dr. Lucio Chua Tan Student Success Center on Wednesday, Jan. 10, capping off the launch of four major construction projects totaling $50 million that will expand the UOG campus.

The Dr. Lucio Chua Tan Student Success Center, estimated to cost $22.9 million, features 45,000 square feet over two stories. It will become the hub of student services, including Admissions, Financial Aid, Counseling and Advising, Student Health, and Career Development. The Center will also provide multi-use collaboration spaces and a creativity and innovation area where students can exercise their imagination and entrepreneurial muscles—to design, fabricate, test, and demonstrate ideas.

The facility is being built across from the Calvo Field House and will provide enhanced student experiences with the new Triton Store, Coffee Shop, and Dining Hall featuring a banquet room and meeting spaces for the Student Government Assocation and student organizations.

"This will be a vibrant hub for our students coming through our halls and coming through the offices that are intended to support student success in a variety of ways," UOG president Anita Borja Enriquez said.

The project was seeded with a gift of $1 million from Dr. Lucio Chua Tan, a self-made Philippines-based business tycoon whose interests span banking, airlines, sports, real estate, and beverages, among others. Tan's business ventures in Guam include the Micronesia Mall, Philippine Airlines, American Bakery, and Guam Beachfront Residences.

Enriquez expressed gratitude to members of Tan's family who attended the groundbreaking, including his daughters, Sheila Tan Pascual, Jeselyn Tan Yu, and Karlu Tan Say, and several grandchildren.

Sheila Pascual, representing Tan, read a letter on his behalf saying, in part, "I did not hesitate (to support UOG) as education has been and continues to be a foundational philosophy of my philanthropy. I firmly believe that truly there is no end to learning."

Enriquez also recognized the joint efforts of the UOG Board of Regents and the UOG Endowment Foundation in concert with the USDA Rural Development office to secure the USDA loan that made the project possible.

Christian Gyles Ramos, the 62nd Student Government Association vice president, said the long-awaited project shows what UOG can accomplish as a united community.

"If we continue to do this, together, we will have an island where every student's dreams come true, problems get easily resolved, and everyone gets a chance at living their best life. It is time we do something about it, and it begins here, with the new student center," Ramos said.

Reliable Builders Inc. is the construction contractor. Local Architect Enrico A. Cristobal designed the building.

The project is expected to be completed in April 2025.

UOG also recently launched the construction of the School of Engineering, the Nursing Annex for the Dr. Margaret Perez Hattori-Uchima School of Health, and the Water and Environmental Research Institute of the Western Pacific. ***(UOG)***

UOG

The University of Guam holds a groundbreaking for the $22.9-million Dr. Lucio Chua Tan Student Success Center on Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024. UOG president Anita Borja Enriquez, acting governor Josh Tenorio, Guam senators, UOG Board of Regents members, the UOG Endowment Foundation Board of Directors, members of Dr. Lucio Tan's family, and UOG student leaders attend the event.

UOG

From left, Karlu Tan Say, Jeselyn Tan Yu and Sheila Tan Pascual, daughters of Philippine-based business tycoon Dr. Lucio Tan, join Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, president of the University of Guam, for a photo after the groundbreaking ceremony for the Dr. Lucio Chua Tan Student Success Center.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-005

OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR CUC ROTA's ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. For registration inquiries, please email Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-005, Office Space Lease for CUC Rota's Administrative Functions and Operations."* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at email address alvin.king@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 11925 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: info@cnmilicensing.gov.mp
Website: www.cnmilicensing.gov.mp

Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) hereby gives notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 8 a.m. on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Board of Professional Licensing Conference Room, BPL Building on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (12/20/2023)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
VII. Director's Report
- Update Localgov online payment
- Financial Report

VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
A. Governor's Office
B. Legislature
X. Old Business
XI. New Business
- Special Facility Permit

XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
A. New Application
B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
- Special Facility Permit

XV. Announcements
A. Next Meeting Date
B. Adjournment of Meeting

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-DPW/ED-42400027

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR DPW, ENERGY DIVISION"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS - ENERGY DIVISION BY JANUARY 26, 2024, TO, MR. VINCENT ATTAO VIA EMAIL AT v.attao@cnmienergy.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ THELMA B. INOS
DIRECTOR,
DPW-ENERGY DIVISION

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 9

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

WE BETTER TELL THE WHITE HOUSE ABOUT OUR OTHER SECRETS.
The Pentagon
I GUESS I'M GOING BACK TO AREA 51.
LAS VEGAS SUN 2024
MIKE SMITH
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/UAS

EDITORIAL

In Philadelphia's measles outbreak, a reminder of the importance of vaccines

From so-called vaccine skeptics like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to anti-vaccine advocates like Robert F. Kennedy Jr., some politicians are hoping to gain political power by exploiting the misguided fears of worried parents and the curdled selfishness of American individualism exemplified by the anti-vaxxer movement.

Although these candidates' chances of reaching the presidency are slim, the potentially lethal consequences of their way of thinking threaten to erase decades of public health gains and reintroduce long-dormant diseases into populations that are too young to be vaccinated.

Philadelphians were reminded of the dangers of the anti-vaccine movement last week when the city's Department of Public Health confirmed a measles outbreak. As of Friday, there were six confirmed and three suspected cases, officials said. The cluster began at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and spread to a day-care center where parents had sent their ill child in violation of quarantine guidelines.

Measles is a childhood disease caused by a virus that produces a characteristic red rash. It spreads easily (it is significantly more contagious than COVID-19) and can be fatal. Symptoms include high fever, cough, and runny nose. Serious cases can cause brain inflammation or respiratory failure. Thanks to the MMR vaccine—which provides protection against measles, mumps, and rubella—the disease has been nearly eradicated in the United States.

As of Dec. 7, a total of 41 measles cases were reported across the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The largest number of cases in the last 30 years occurred in 2019, when more than 1,200 were confirmed in 31 states. Most cases were among people who were not vaccinated against measles.

Infants typically receive the first dose of the MMR vaccine between 12 and 15 months, and children receive their second dose between the ages of 4 and 6.

Along with unprotected children, the illness can be especially dangerous for those who are pregnant and people with weakened immune systems.

The latest Philly cluster began with an infant—who may have been too young to be vaccinated—who was admitted to CHOP in December, after visiting a country where measles is more common. That infant infected two others: another infant too young to have gotten the MMR vaccine, and an older child whose parents had refused vaccination. One of the older child's parents then developed measles, as well. Another two people developed measles after one of the patients visited their day-care center, in violation of quarantine rules; it's unclear if these two people were old enough to be vaccinated, and if so, if they had received the shot.

See IN on Page 11

Will the US bomb the Houthis?

By DANIEL DEPETRIS
Chicago Tribune

Daniel DePetris is a fellow at Defense Priorities and a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune.

President Joe Biden's administration has spent the last three months trying to prevent the war in Gaza from spreading to other regions in the Middle East. Yet the Houthis, who in 2014 overthrew the internationally recognized government in Yemen and have been acting as the country's de facto authorities ever since, have other ideas. The Yemeni group-turned-rebel army is increasingly treating the Red Sea as an area of active hostilities, forcing the United States into debating a number of policy options, including the use of military force, to keep the waterway open to global commerce.

Armed in part by Iran and well stocked after overrunning the Yemeni army's weapons depots, the Houthis have launched numerous drone and ballistic missile attacks toward civilian ships sailing through the Bab el-Mandeb into the Red Sea. On Dec. 20, the USS Carney, a U.S. warship in the region, shot down 14 drones launched from Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen. On New Year's Eve, U.S. helicopters destroyed three small Houthi boats that were attempting to attack another civilian vessel in the area, killing at least 10 Houthi militants in the process.

These incidents have caused some of the world's biggest shipping and energy companies, including BP, to suspend operations in the Red Sea, through which 12% of the world's trade passes. The Houthis have demonstrated no willingness at this stage to stop these attacks, which they have vowed to continue as long as Israel proceeds with its war against Hamas in Gaza.

Thus far, the U.S. has taken a two-track approach to the crisis: using backchannel diplomacy to demand the Houthis cease these unwarranted strikes and organizing a multinational naval task force that aims to protect civilian cargo vessels as they move toward the Suez Canal. The administration hopes that by internationalizing the problem and bringing more stakeholders into the game, the Houthis will become more restrained, lest they bring about a global military response. In case the Houthis missed the message, the U.S. and other nations published a joint statement on Jan. 3 that sounded like a final warning to the group: Stop the attacks or face the consequences.

Ultimately, the U.S. and its European and Arab partners hope the maritime coalition, Operation Prosperity Guardian, will be sufficient enough to bring the Houthis down to size. Yet it's also possible the Houthis are fully committed to elevating their stature in the so-called axis of resistance against Israel and may even relish a fight with the U.S. The Houthis may also be betting that, were the U.S. to act militarily, Iran would become far more involved on its behalf. Such a scenario is not out of the question. While Iran has demonstrated no interest in getting into a direct conflict with the U.S., the Houthis have been an effective asset for Tehran over the last eight years by bogging down Saudi Arabia, which backs Yemen's recognized government, in an unwinnable war.

Some U.S. officials are frustrated about the Biden administration's policy to date, which is limited to rhetorical warnings and defensive measures taken at sea. Proponents of a more aggressive U.S. response argue that greater force against Houthi-controlled Yemen is the only policy that will scare the group straight and deter it from conducting similar attacks against civilian ships in the future.

There is some merit to this argument. Unlike the Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria that the U.S. has periodically bombed over the last several months, the Houthis actually control territory, administer services, seek to control the whole country and thus have more to protect.

But the U.S. can't bank on deterrence working quickly—if it works at all. This isn't because the Houthis are suicidal maniacs with a death wish, but rather because it will likely take a significant amount of military force in Yemen to establish deterrence in the first place. This itself is a problem. The more force the U.S. uses, the more likely the Houthis will retaliate in some way—if not against U.S. warships stationed a few dozen miles off the Yemeni coastline, then against U.S. partners such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel, all of which the Houthis have already targeted with ballistic missiles over the years.

For the Saudis in particular, who are trying to negotiate their way out of a eight-year conflict in Yemen they can't win militarily, renewed hostilities against the Houthis are the last thing they want to see. Riyadh seeks to uphold a 20-month-long truce with the Houthis and are counseling the Biden administration to practice restraint. U.S. strikes in Yemen could very well tear apart the fragile truce, result in renewed Houthi missile fire against the kingdom and force the Saudis to escalate their own military operations to save face. It would also put the U.S. in the strange position of watching one policy goal—deterring the Houthis—destroy another—establishing a peaceful political settlement to the nearly decadelong civil war in Yemen.

Advocates of U.S. military action point to October 2016, when Barack Obama's administration authorized cruise missile attacks against three Houthi-operated radar sites along Yemen's coast in retaliation for attempting to attack a U.S. war-

See WILL on Page 11

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The honest facts about subpoenas

Editor's Note: The following is an article submitted by the office of Rep. Rep. Marissa Flores (Ind-Saipan) to respond to questions related to her bill, House Bill 23-22.

Rep. Marissa Flores filed House Bill 23-22. The Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee held a hearing on the bill, accepting public comments and written comments from various interested agencies and persons. The JGO Committee adopted a substitute version of the bill, which addressed concerns raised during comments. The committee recommended approval of the substitute bill and prepared a committee report reflecting the substitute bill's meaning and history.

The investigative subpoena bill now sits in the Senate, assigned to the Judiciary, Government and Law Committee, chaired by Sen. Celina Babauta (D-Saipan). This bill needs the support of the Senate to become law.

The JGL Committee held a hearing and recommended approval of the bill. However, a majority of the Senate refused to vote on the merits of the bill, and instead, returned it to the JGL Committee. The bill now awaits further action. Senate President Edith Deleon Guerrero (D-Saipan) has authority to call up the bill for action at any time. She has exercised that authority several times for her own bills and resolutions.

> "Every other single prosecutor office in every state and U.S. territory already has a similar procedure for issuing investigative subpoenas. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is the *only* jurisdiction without such procedure set out in law."

Meanwhile, local criminal defense lawyer Rob Torres and 15 other lawyers who represent persons charged with crimes, hereinafter known as The Torres 16, have made statements about H.B. 23-22. As those statements are not accurate, the following questions and answers are submitted so that the public can have a reasonable understanding of the issues being raised and the answers that are supported by the law.

What does the bill do?

H.B. 23-22 sets out a procedure for the attorney general to issue subpoenas to obtain documents and statements as part of the normal process in a criminal investigation. This is a very common and accepted procedure for issuance of subpoenas.

Why is the bill needed?

The attorney general has the duty to investigate and prosecute criminal cases. While the Department of Public Safety is the primary investigating agency for criminal matters, the attorney general has the ultimate responsibility for completing investigations and exercising discretion in filing criminal charges.

Every other single prosecutor office in every state and U.S. territory already has a similar procedure for issuing investigative subpoenas. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is the *only* jurisdiction without such procedure set out in law. Without an investigative subpoena procedure in place, the CNMI attorney general is unable to complete investigations and properly prosecute criminal cases. In short, the gap in the law weakens public safety and threatens to allow public corruption to continue unprosecuted.

What is a subpoena?

A subpoena is a written demand for a person to provide a document or answer questions. Such a demand can be directed, for example, to a bank for deposit records or a hospital for medical records. In addition, the request can be directed to a person to answer questions under oath.

Who issues the investigative subpoena?

The attorney general files an application for the subpoena with the court. The court then issues the subpoena, if the application complies with all the legal requirements set out in law.

What procedures protect a suspect who is the target of a subpoena?

The Torres 16 have loudly proclaimed that the bill is unfair. They have suggested that the subpoenas will be used to violate the rights of a defendant. That is simply untrue. The Torres 16, who are all lawyers, should know better.

If a subpoena is issued to a person who is the target of a criminal investigation, the following protections will exist to make sure all constitutional rights are protected:

- The subpoena must notify the witness in writing whether the witness is a target of a criminal investigation.
- The subpoena must notify the witness in writing of the subject matter of the investigation.
- The subpoena must notify the witness that a court authorized the subpoena.
- The witness is entitled to a 48-hour notice before any questioning takes place.
- The witness can challenge the subpoena by arguing before a court that the application was improper for some appropriate reason.
- Before any questioning, the witness must be warned of the constitutional right to remain silent and the right to an attorney.
- Before questioning begins, the witness may be represented by a lawyer and consult with that lawyer by pausing questioning and seeking counsel.
- The witness may stop any questioning by invoking the constitutional right to remain silent.
- The questions and answers must be recorded.
- If charges are filed, the defendant has a right to a copy of the recording.
- The defendant has the right to argue that the recording is inadmissible if the attorney general did not follow all of the procedures set out to protect the rights of the defendant.
- The attorney general is required to respect the rights of a defendant as part of the responsibilities set out in the American Bar Association lawyer ethical standards.

By MARISSA FLORES

Rep. Marissa Flores (Ind-Saipan) is a member of the CNMI House of Representatives of the 23rd Legislature.

Does the attorney general support the bill?

The attorney general has provided strong written support for the bill. He has indicated that every other American prosecutor already has such subpoena power. He has explained that the bill would improve the collection of evidence in preparation for deciding whether to file criminal charges. Without subpoena power, the attorney general's criminal cases are weakened, resulting in ineffective law enforcement, especially in the area of public corruption.

The investigative subpoena bill is a common sense improvement of our criminal justice system. The bill deserves to be heard in the Senate.

Tinian Tasi Yan Langit 'Sonneta'

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

My "sonneta" is written in sonata form: Exposition, Development, Recapitulation, and Coda. *Tasi* means ocean, *langit* is sky.

EXPOSITION:

"The sea can do craziness, it can do smooth,
…and so no doubt can you and you."
—Mary Oliver (1935 - 2019)

DEVELOPMENT:

The Tinian Sea can be *todu kaduku*, crazy
yan lokkue tosta, low tide quiet and smooth
after weeks of calm it sometimes seems lazy
then it quickly becomes rough and uncouth.

Spitting sand and seaweed up on the shore
as it has done for countless centuries before
fish get caught in throw nets near the beach
some escape and swim quickly out of reach.

We too can be crazy, lazy, calm, and quiet
disrespectful, dishonest, rude, and uncouth
manifest gluttonous habits, need for a diet
in life's ups and downs, old age back to youth.

As we live and love next to the Philippine Sea
the ocean can be rough and calm and so can we.

RECAPITULATION:

Home seems so far away so sad am I
the channel is wide I cannot get across
the ocean waves crash, break and toss
I'm longing to look up at stars in the sky.

CODA:

I look for steamy looking distant stars down
near the Scorpio constellation's tail
coming out of the Teakettle constellation's
spout with hope my eyes don't fail.

N.B. The Milky Way galaxy can be seen with the naked eye between the tail of the Scorpio constellation and the spout of the Teakettle constellation. The galaxy looks like steam that is coming out of the spout.

IN

From page 10

This cluster is an important reminder of why every eligible Philadelphian needs to receive the MMR vaccine: to protect those who are too young to get it.

Anti-vaxx parents' fears over vaccinations often stem from a 1998 paper in the Lancet, a British medical journal, that claimed to identify a link between the MMR vaccine and autism. This study—based on only 12 children—was later retracted when it was found to be fraudulent. The British Medical Council ultimately ruled that the study's author behaved unethically and with "callous disregard" for children.

Many studies since then have shown there is no link between the MMR vaccine and the risk of autism.

Beyond the clinical trials that are necessary for each vaccine to receive approval by the Food and Drug Administration, the MMR vaccine has been a part of childhood medical care for decades (the measles vaccine was introduced in 1963). In that period, mountains of evidence have showcased the vaccine's effectiveness and safety.

It's easy to forget that, in the pre-vaccination era, children often died before reaching kindergarten, let alone adulthood. In 1900, 30% of all U.S. deaths occurred in children under the age of 5. Before the polio vaccine was introduced in the mid-20th century, the virus killed or paralyzed more than half a million people around the world every year. Today, thanks to vaccination, polio is not something most Americans think about anymore.

Vaccines have put an end to what has, for generations, been a cruel part of the human experience. We must remain vigilant to avoid reverting to that deadly status quo.

©2024 The Philadelphia Inquirer, LLC

WILL

From page 10

ship. The group stopped messing around with U.S. assets after those airstrikes. But those strikes were limited to facilities that didn't threaten the Houthis' military or political power. In a potentially wider military operation, the U.S. can't assume the Houthis would react with similar caution.

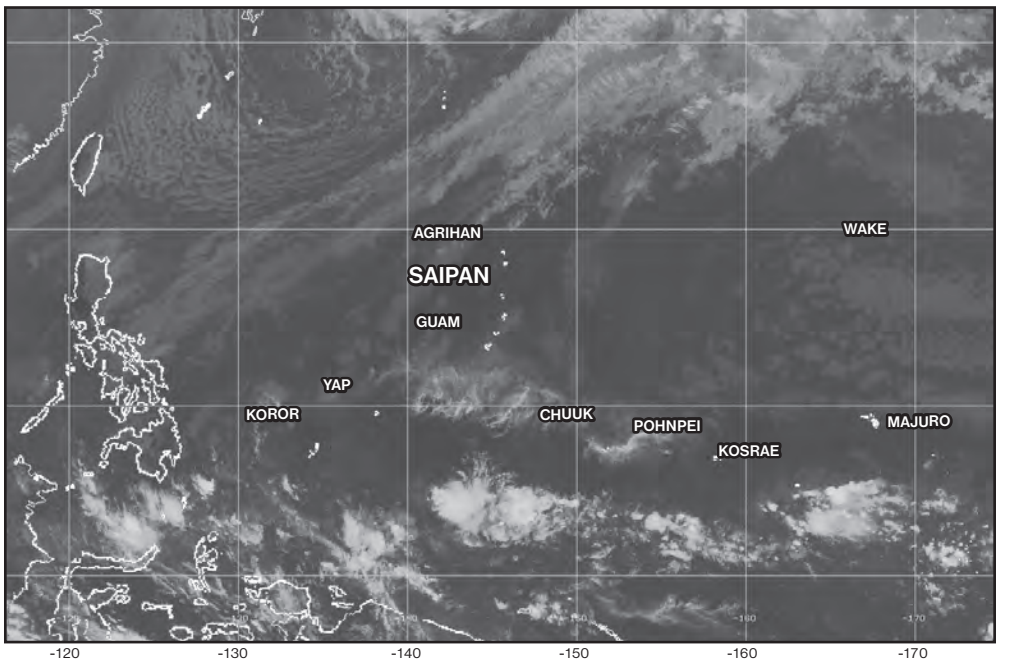
Thus far, the U.S. has been able to avert wider escalation even as it deploys more warships and fighter aircraft to the Middle East. Events in the Red Sea will test this balance now more than ever.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.
87 78°	87 78°	87 78°	87 78°	87 78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:20 AM THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows partly cloudy skies over the region. Surface winds are light to moderate, and buoys show combined seas in the 6 to 8 foot range, mainly from the northeast to east, but also northerly components. Ipan buoy water temperature is 84 degrees.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 77°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	83° / 77°
Chuuk	Sunny	85° / 81°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	83° / 79°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	83° / 81°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:03 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:04 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:05 PM
Monday	6:46 AM	6:05 PM
Tuesday	6:46 AM	6:06 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	7:22 AM	6:51 PM	-
Saturday	8:18 AM	7:57 PM	-
Sunday	9:07 AM	8:59 PM	-
Monday	9:52 AM	9:58 PM	-
Tuesday	10:34 AM	10:55 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	76° / 64°
Beijing	Sunny	40° / 19°
Hong Kong	Fair	72° / 61°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	81° / 71°
London	Light Rain	43° / 40°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	72° / 49°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	84° / 72°
Melbourne	Cloudy	69° / 54°
Miami	Cloudy	77° / 67°
New York	Cloudy	55° / 44°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	50° / 41°
Paris	Light Rain	50° / 42°
Busan	Sunny	48° / 34°
Rome	Sunny	50° / 31°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	53° / 32°
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	58° / 44°
Seoul	Cloudy	37° / 24°
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	54° / 39°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	58° / 43°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
2:05 AM	Low Tide	-0.87
9:25 AM	High Tide	1.81
2:33 PM	Low Tide	1.18
7:18 PM	High Tide	1.88

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Special Feature

WHAT I WISH FOR CHRISTMAS:

A contest that turns children's wishes into reality

By NHORLEEN BITCO-LILLES
Special to Saipan Tribune

For Christmas last year, 200 children from 12 different schools all over the CNMI wrote down the gifts they wished for the holidays, and why they wanted them. Aside from picking the winners of the best drawings for the contest, *Saipan Tribune* wanted to make this a special kind of Christmas for many children by granting their wishes in this most special time of the year.

Aside from many companies and generous sponsors, the employees and executives of TanHoldings also took part and randomly picked entries and opened their own pockets to try to fulfill what the children were wishing for Christmas. The overarching goal of *Saipan Tribune* was to make the children happy and to grant as many wishes as possible.

RAY ZAPANTA

Jackie Gao of Hopwood Middle School poses for a photo as he receives his wish for a Pikachu plushie at the *Saipan Tribune* office. The plushie was sponsored by Sheryl Concepcion of Century Insurance. Gao is one of the children who got their wishes granted by the What I Wish for Christmas Drawing Contest.

The participating children, with ages ranging from 6 to 12 years old, wrote down all kinds of wishes. There were simple ones like a snow globe, puzzles, books, toy dolls, and Hot Wheels. There were also expensive ones such as dirt bikes, rollerblades, drones, Air Jordan shoes, phones, hoverboards, VR headsets, and the like. There were also whimsical wishes for a panda, a polar bear, and a rock to have as pets, or for it to snow on Saipan, as wished by both Ajun Jang, 7, and Yoonmin Cho, 9 from Saipan International School.

One of the touching wishes was from Jarl Marcin Lim Mabaquiao from Green Meadow School, who drew a picture of his family and wrote, "I wish to spend time with family because family is one of the most important thing and every second spent with family is worth it." It touched the heart of an employee who gave cash so the family could eat out together for the holidays.

Mikko Soriano, 8, from Northern Marianas International School, wished for his mother to come back. "My mom had to go to the Philippines and I miss her so much. The only present I want this year is her presence."

Many people were moved by Chastity Jewel Rongcal, 7, from William S. Reyes Elementary School because of her illustration depicting her family but without her father. She wrote: "I love my daddy very much. He went back to the Philippines last Sept. 25 and I miss him very much. The best present and my wish this Christmas is for us to be all together."

Maria Enriquez of Hopwood Middle School had her heart on a trip to the Philippines. "Many kids would wish for an iPhone or a PS5, but I wish for a trip to the Philippines to celebrate the joy with all my cousins and family members. Mainly because of my great grandma, I would like to make all joyful memories with her."

Lea Palacios of Hopwood Middle School and Revalanynn Mality of Oleia Elementary have one thing in common: they both wished for a puppy. Mality wrote, "For Christmas, my biggest wish is to have a puppy! I want one because having a furry friend would be so much fun. A puppy is my Christmas dream come true!"

Precious Zhyra Lozano of Oleai Elementary School wished for a house and a new car for her family. She wrote, "The reason I wish for these two is because it's my mom's dream to have our own house to live in. Even if my mom doesn't get her dream now, hopefully in the future, she can get it if we save enough."

Soriano, Rongcal, Enriquez, Palacios, Mality, and Lozano were all given gift certificates from the TSL Foundation and Chowtime.

"I would want a Pikachu plush for Christmas because I am a big fan of Pikachu, and this will be my first Pokemon plush," said Jackie Gao from Hopwood Middle School. Sheryl Concepcion, of Century Insurance generously bought him the biggest Pikachu plushie she could find to grant him his wish.

RAY ZAPANTA

Alexine Kiesha Dellomos of Oleia Elementary School is looking happy with her gift of Kuromi bag, plushie, and accessories from Abby Das of Century Insurance. Dellomos is one of the children who got their wishes granted by the What I Wish for Christmas Drawing Contest.

"I want Takis," another student stated while drawing a bag of the spicy snack. "because it is my favorite chips and I haven't eaten it in a long time." This wish was granted by a TSL Foundation executive who has granted two more wishes from two other children but asked to remain anonymous.

Sarin Yosie Gechig Ilo drew a toy pony and wrote, "My Christmas wish is for a toy pony because they bring me so much joy, and I love ponies. They're my absolute favorite! Having a toy pony would make my holidays extra special and full of happiness." Her wish was granted by Angelica Mia Carreon of TanHoldings, who happens to love My Little Pony characters as well.

Anthony Deleon Guerrero and Paige Melanee Palacious Monkeya were among those who wished for a volleyball for Christmas. According to Monkeya, "I want a volleyball because I like to play volleyball and I'm good at it." Ferdinand Tagabuel of Hopwood wanted a basketball, while Jiro Quindoza, a soccer ball. Each of these children got the sports balls that they were wishing for.

Britney Mano, 11 of Hopwood Middle School drew several wishes but it was her wish for a crochet kit that caught the eye of Michaela Lala Carreon of Century Insurance who enjoys crocheting herself.

Mario Sedanza Jr., a sixth grade student of Hopwood Middle School, wished for snacks like Pringles and chocolates. Jeremy Maximo of RMS was happy to oblige.

A new arrival to the island, Alexine Kiesha V. Dellomos, 9, of Oleai Elementary School, got a taste of Saipan hospitality when her drawing of Kuromi got picked by Abby Das of Century Insurance. She said, "I want it for Christmas because it has the memory of my classmates from the Philippines." Das went on to give another Kuromi plushy, bag, and accessories to Diane Desiree Merjilla, 11, from Hopwood Middle School who had been wanting it for the whole year.

Lee, Seungwoo, 10, from Saipan Community School, drew a colorful illustration of himself with a box full of soccer jerseys. "What I wish for Christmas is a soccer jersey because I want to become a soccer player." His wish was granted by Saipan Soccer School coach Christy Villaflor, who gave him not one but two soccer jerseys.

All Zoe Muna wanted for Christmas was a teddy bear. She wrote, "When I can't sleep, I can just hug it until I fall asleep." Alayna Laniyo, on the other hand, wished for a drawing book. "I want a drawing book for Christmas because I want to be an artist." Muna and Laniyo's wishes were happily granted by an employee of Saipan Tribune.

Roxy Marleina Gabionza from Hopwood Middle School wanted plane tickets to Texas to see her brother. "I haven't seen my brother in person for a long time and I really miss him. I haven't seen him in three years or more." Gabionza got a gift certificate from the TSL Foundation.

Donors

Saipan Tribune sales associate Christine Hayag, was among those who went out of their way to grant some of the wishes. Hayag gifted pens, colors, and crayons to two children who wished for drawing materials for Christmas. "I wanted to make the kids happy because not everyone is privileged enough to receive the gift they want for Christmas." The matching sketch pads that went with those sets were gifted by Saipan Tribune head accountant Magie Chavez who said she felt the real spirit of Christmas in the air during the gift-giving.

Abby Das of Century Insurance also felt nice about granting some children's wishes. "I believe in giving back to the community, especially to the kids. I chose to give Kuromi [because] I love it and since I don't have a daughter to spoil, here's my chance to spoil other people's daughters."

"I appreciated what *Saipan Tribune* did for the children on Christmas," said Carrreon of TanHoldings. "For me, it's really nice because I have a kid of my own and she is happy when she receives gifts and so when I was given the opportunity to make other children happy, I did it."

Cathy Attao of L&T reflects, "Christmas is all about celebrating the spirit of joy, as our savior has been born. In view of the beautiful drawings and reading some of the Christmas wishes, I felt so inclined to support and participate because many of their drawings and wishes were so touching." She added, "Through their artwork, I can see the beauty within their hearts. It was an honor to be a participant and be able to grant some wishes."

Community Choice Award

After the initial awarding of the main winners, *Saipan Tribune* launched the voting on their Facebook page for the Community Choice Awards on Dec. 28, 2023, until Jan. 10, 2024. The Community Choice award winner is Precious Zhyra Lozano. Consolation prizes go to Colin Lilles, Mikko Soriano, Mark Eron Ezekiel Abu, Jiro Quindoza, and Eldrich Jewel Armia. Winners won gift certificates from Kyokushinkai Karate and/or Shirley's Coffee Shop, courtesy of the TSL Foundation.

Saipan Tribune would like to extend its warmest thanks to the management and staff Judy Mendieta, Mark Rabago, Magie Chavez, Jose Roberto Aguilar, Nhorleen Bitco-Lilles, Rosalie Mangalubnan, and Christine Hayag; To L&T's Cathy Attao Toves, Elna Curate, and Kenneth Reyes; Sheryl Concepcion, Michaella Lala Carreon, Abi Das, Ana Licop, Christian de Jose and Beth Janeo of Century Insurance; Noel Conti, Jeremy Maximo, Arriane Antonio, and Christian Bravo of Realty Management Services; Christy Villaflor and Irish Pagarao of Saipan Soccer School; Raymond Zapanta of TSL Foundation; Nathaniel Angeles, Aldrich Delos Santos, Angelo Cristobal, Angelica Mia Carreon of TanHoldings and many other donors who wish to remain anonymous.

NHORLEEN BITCO-LILLES

Precious Zhyra Lozano of Oleai Elementary School smile for a photo with her artwork, certificate of recognition as the Community Choice Award winner, and prizes at the *Saipan Tribune* office. Lozano's drawing garnered a total of 675 votes.

The art contest and this gift-giving venture wouldn't have been possible without generous sponsors: TanHoldings Corp. and its philanthropic arm, the Tan Siu Lin Foundation; Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, E-Land, Century Insurance Co. Ltd, McDonald's, P&A Community Corp.-International Roller Skates, Brabu Pharmacy, Chowtime, Saipan Mayor's Office and Mayor Ramon "RB" Camacho, Saipan Shipping, Kyokushinkai Karate, CTSI Logistics, Old Spice, D&Q, Jet Holdings Co., RNV Construction, Lollipops, Girl Talk, and Bridge Capital.

While not everyone received their exact requests, every participant who made a wish received something, thanks to the generous hearts and contributions of numerous individuals and companies involved. The sheer joy and excitement in the children's faces as they received their gifts made this endeavor truly fulfilling. There is magic in Christmas indeed.

Business

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Tupu Cane Juice opens at Paseo de Marianas

Tupu Cane Juice finally has its own brick-and-mortar store with the opening of its location at Paseo de Marianas last Dec. 27.

General manager Cameron Atalig said clamor from loyal customers who patronized their all-natural, handcrafted sugarcane juice at the Sabalu Market prompted them to open Tupu Cane Juice in the heart of Garapan.

And it couldn't come at a better time as Saipan's tourist district is undergoing a major makeover through the Garapan Revitalization Project and catering to tourists, Atalig said, is the next step in Tupu Cane Juice's growth.

It's not hard to understand why Tupu Cane Juice has struck such a chord in the local community. Atalig said tupu means sugarcane in Chamorro and Tupu Cane Juice is all about capturing the vibrant flavors and invigorating properties of this ancient tropical plant.

Hand-harvested from the Atalig family's small farm on Saipan, the cane juice is extracted using traditional and cold-pressed methods, ensuring the freshest quality and nutritional value.

The genesis of the new business was actually an overabundance of sugar cane.

"In late 2022, we had a lot of sugarcanes growing and needed to be harvested. We heard of sugarcane juice being extracted so we purchased a small mini machine. When we tasted the natural goodness and learned of the healthy benefits of this delicious juice, we had to share this with the community."

MARK RABAGO
Tapu Cane Juice's new storefront location is located at the Paseo de Marianas.

At the end of April, Tupu Cane Juice finally debuted at the Sabalu Market and everything—as they say—was history.

"We sold Tupu Cane Juice and were overwhelmed with the positive feedback from the market-goers. We knew we had something good to offer the community," he said.

Tupu Cane Juice quickly become a favorite at the Sabalu Market, with many returning customers praising its nostalgic flavors reminiscent of childhood sugarcane memories.

From the Sabalu Market, Tupu Cane Juice went on to expand its reach by participating in events like the Taste of the Marianas, Liberation Day Festival, local concerts, and at the T-Galleria in Garapan.

"Now, with the new storefront at Garapan on the Paseo de Marianas, Tupu Cane Juice aims to provide a central hub for sugarcane enthusiasts," said Atalig.

He said sugarcane juice isn't just delicious, as it also offers numerous health benefits.

"Packed with natural sweetness, rich nutrients, and minerals, it's a low-calorie option for health-conscious individuals. The juice's potent antioxidant properties can help reduce the risk of conditions like kidney stones and joint pain. Furthermore, as a caffeine-free hydrating beverage, sugarcane juice provides a delightful and wholesome alternative to conventional soft drinks," he said.

Currently, Tupu Cane Juice has a flavor of the week promotion where a revolving list of drinks will be $1 off. The flavors available include Pure Tupu, Coffee Tupu, Fruity Tupu, Berry Tupu, Calamansi Tupu, Coconut Tupu, Strawberry Tupu, Mango Tupu, and Dragon Tupu.

Atalig said it's his hope through Tupu Cane Juice, sugarcane will eventually become the CNMI's signature product like how pineapple and mango are synonymous with Hawaii and the Philippines, respectively.

Tupu Cane Juice's storefront location is open Mondays through Saturdays from 11am to 8pm. Tupu Cane Juice also continues to sell their sugarcane juice at the Sabalu Market and T Galleria (Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday). For more information, check their Facebook and Instagram page. You can also visit their website at www.tupucanejuice.com.

MARK RABAGO
Tupu Cane Juice has a flavor of the week promotion where a revolving list of drinks will be $1 off.

MARK RABAGO
Tapu Cane Juice general manager Cameron Atalig, right, with his father, David Atalig.

US consumer inflation pressures may have eased further in December

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Federal Reserve, tentatively pleased with progress it's made in fighting inflation, has declared what amounts to a ceasefire: The Fed stopped raising interest rates in July, after imposing an aggressive 11 hikes since March 2022, to take time to see how the economy would respond.

So far, so good.

Inflation has kept slowing, and the economy has withstood the strain of the accumulated higher borrowing costs. Hope is growing that the central bank can achieve a rare "soft landing" by cooling the economy just enough to tame inflation without causing a recession. The financial markets, in fact, seem increasingly optimistic that the Fed can soon begin cutting rates, which would lighten borrowing costs for consumers and businesses.

On Thursday, the Labor Department is expected to report that underlying inflationary pressures eased further in December. Excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" prices likely rose 0.2% from November, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet, down from a 0.3% rise the previous month. And compared with 12 months earlier, core prices are thought to have risen 3.8% in December, down from a 4% year-over-year increase in November.

Economists pay particular attention to core prices because, by excluding costs that typically fluctuate sharply from month to month, they are a better guide to the likely path of inflation.

Alaska Airlines cancels flights on certain Boeing planes through Saturday for mandatory inspections

Alaska Airlines is canceling through Saturday all flights on Boeing 737 Max 9 planes like the one that suffered an in-flight blowout of a fuselage panel last week as it waits for new instructions from Boeing and federal officials on how to inspect the fleet.

The development came as signs indicate some travelers might try to avoid flying on Max 9 jetliners—at least temporarily.

Seattle-based Alaska Airlines said Wednesday that it would cancel 110 to 150 flights a day while the Max 9 planes remain grounded. By late afternoon, Alaska had canceled about 125 flights—one-fifth of its schedule for the day.

"We hope this action provides guests with a little more certainty, and we are working around the clock to reaccommodate impacted guests on other flights," the airline said on its website.

United Airlines, the only other U.S. carrier that operates the Max 9, had canceled 167 flights because of the grounding order.

The Federal Aviation Administration grounded all Max 9s in the United States on Saturday, the day after a panel called a door plug blew off an Alaska Airlines jet over Oregon, leaving a hole in the side of the plane. The plug replaces extra doors that are used on Max 9s that are outfitted with more seats than Alaska uses.

The pilots of flight 1282 were able to return to Portland, Oregon, and make a safe emergency landing. No serious injuries were reported.

Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board said this week they have not found four bolts used to help secure the 63-pound door plug, and they are not certain whether the bolts were missing before the plane took off or broke during the flight.

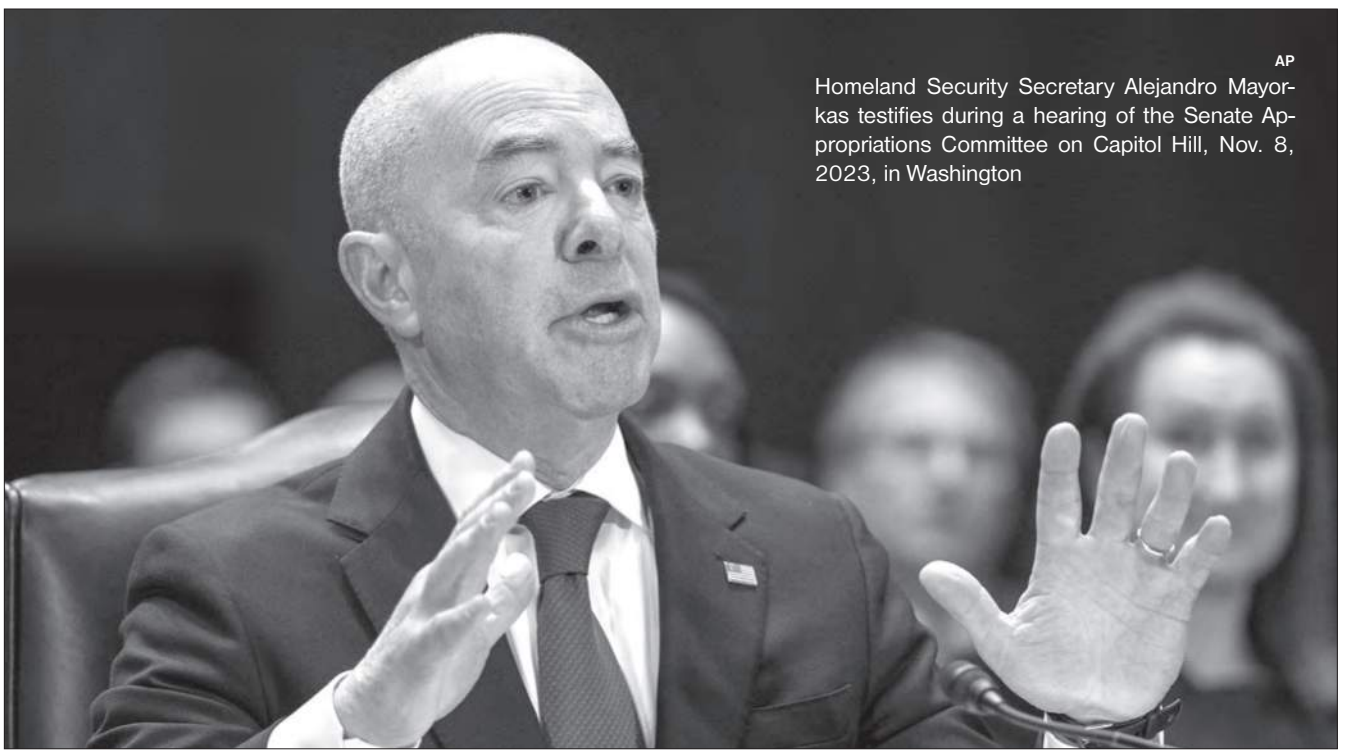
The FAA approved inspection and repair guidelines developed by Boeing on Monday. However, on Tuesday the agency ordered Boeing to revise the instructions based on "feedback received in response." ***(AP)***

Nation

AS HOUSE GOP LAUNCHES EFFORT TO IMPEACH HIM

Senators want to strike border deal with Mayorkas

WASHINGTON (AP)—Marching ahead with multiple impeachment plans, House Republicans set their sights Wednesday on Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who they intend to prove is "derelict in his duty" over handling the surge of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.



AP

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies during a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Capitol Hill, Nov. 8, 2023, in Washington

The chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Mark Green, launched Mayorkas impeachment proceedings at a peculiar political moment: On one side of the Capitol, a bipartisan group of senators has been engaged in almost daily negotiations with Mayorkas over a landmark border security package. On the other, the House wants to remove him from office.

Opening the hearing, Green, R-Tenn, said there is "no reasonable alternative but to pursue the possibility of impeachment."

The House panel has been circling Mayorkas all year, at times expected to lurch ahead with impeachment proceedings against him as the border crossings hit record highs, topping 10,000 on some days. The number has recently dipped.

But impeaching a Cabinet secretary is rare, having only happened once before in the nation's history when the House impeached Defense Secretary William Belknap in 1876 over kickbacks in government contracts. Going after an official for a policy dispute, in this instance over the claim that Mayorkas is not upholding immigration laws, is unprecedented.

"You cannot impeach a Cabinet secretary because you don't like a president's policies," said the top Democrat on the committee, Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi.

Thompson said evidence throughout the hearings will show that Mayorkas is, in fact, doing his job. He decried the political dysfunction coming from the House Republican majority. "This is not a legitimate impeachment," he said.

With the House GOP's impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden, over his son Hunter Biden's business dealings, lumbering along as lawmakers work to dig up information, the Republicans are sharpening their focus on the border crossings and the probe of Mayorkas.

Speaker Mike Johnson, who leads a majority that prefers conducting oversight and investigations over pursuing bipartisan legislating to resolve concerns, gave nod to the proceedings and called Mayorkas the "leading perpetrator" of the border problems. "Congress is now going to have to take the next step and hold him accountable," he said at a press conference.

Johnson also spoke Wednesday with Biden and "strongly encouraged" the president to use his executive authority to secure the southern border, said the speaker's spokesman, Raj Shah.

Green's committee conducted a multi-part investigation into Mayorkas and the department but kicked the process into high gear when hard-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene pushed forward the impeachment resolution after Johnson won the speaker's gavel following the ouster of Rep. Kevin McCarthy as speaker.

It remains to be seen if the House investigation will convince lawmakers that Mayorkas' conduct rises to the level of the "high crimes and misdemeanors" the Constitution specifies for impeachment.

Many Republicans prefer a return to Donald Trump-era immigration policies, and they blame Biden for taking actions to stop construction of the border wall and end the COVID-19 era restrictions that prevented many migrants from entering the U.S. Both policies had been championed by the former president, who is now the GOP front-runner for the party's 2024 presidential nomination.

"The evidence documented throughout this report will demonstrate that Mayorkas has been, and continues to be, derelict in the solemn duty to secure the nation's borders," the panel's initial report said.

Green, the chair of the committee, has echoed a baseless racist conspiracy idea known as the "great replacement theory" when he argued recently that Mayorkas' "intent" by removing fewer migrants than Trump did was to "fundamentally change the population of the United States, and I believe to empower the Democrat party in perpetuity."

ACROSS THE NATION

Republicans push ahead with Hunter Biden contempt charge after his surprise visit to Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON (AP)—Republicans on Wednesday took the first step toward holding Hunter Biden in contempt of Congress for defying a congressional subpoena. They advanced the charge to a full House vote just hours after the president's son sparked a momentary political frenzy by appearing in the front row for part of the debate. The House Oversight and Judiciary committees each passed contempt charges against the younger Biden with unanimous Republican support and all Democrats opposed. The action sets up a House vote on recommending criminal charges against a member of President Joe Biden's family as the GOP moves into the final stages of an impeachment inquiry into the president himself. If the House votes to hold Hunter Biden in contempt, it will be up to the Department of Justice, specifically the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, to decide whether to prosecute. It's the latest step for the inquiry, which began in September, but has so far failed to uncover evidence directly implicating the president in wrongdoing involving his son's business dealings.

Christie ends his Republican presidential bid, criticizing his rivals on his way out

WINDHAM, N.H. (AP)—Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie on Wednesday suspended his Republican presidential bid just days before Iowa's leadoff caucuses, ceding to growing pressure to drop out of the race from those desperate to deny Donald Trump a glidepath to the nomination. Addressing supporters at a New Hampshire town hall, Christie said he had come to the conclusion that he had no pathway to victory. "Campaigns are run to win. That's why we do them," he said. "It's clear to me tonight that there isn't a path for me to win the nomination." "My goal has never been to be just a voice against the hate and division and the selfishness of what our party has become under Donald Trump," he added, vowing to continue to warn the party and the country about the dangers of a second Trump term. "I am going to make sure that in no way do I enable Donald Trump to ever be president of the United States again. And that's more important than my own personal ambition," he said.

Avalanche kills 1, injures 3 at California ski resort that once hosted Winter Olympics

RENO, Nev. (AP)—An avalanche roared through a section of expert trails at a California ski resort near Lake Tahoe on Wednesday, sweeping up four people and killing one, as a major storm with snow and gusty winds moved into the region, authorities said. The avalanche occurred about 9:30 a.m. and prompted Palisades Tahoe to close as search crews combed the area under the K-22 lift, which 30 minutes earlier had opened for the first time this season. It serves "black diamond" runs for skilled skiers and snowboarders. Skier Mark Sponsler said he arrived at the KT-22 lift amid howling winds and white-out conditions to find it shut down. Unbeknownst to him, the avalanche had just hit. He spoke to someone who was in the second group to ride up the lift that morning. That person was in the lift and watched the disaster from above, said Sponsler, a veteran weather forecaster and founder of stormsurf.com. "There was screaming, there were skis and poles and a hand sticking up out of the snow," Sponsler said the witness told him.

Judge says Trump won't give own closing argument at civil fraud trial

NEW YORK (AP)—Donald Trump won't make his own closing argument after all in his New York civil business fraud trial after his lawyers objected to the judge's insistence that the former president stick to "relevant" matters and "not deliver a campaign speech."

Judge Arthur Engoron nixed Trump's unusual plan on Wednesday, a day ahead of closing arguments.

The judge had initially indicated he was open to the idea, saying he'd let Trump speak if he agreed to abide by rules that apply to attorneys' closing arguments. Among other things, Engoron wanted the former president and current Republican front-runner to promise he wouldn't assail his adversaries in the case, the judge or others in the court system.

Trump's legal team said those limitations unfairly muzzled him. When Engoron didn't hear from them by a Wednesday deadline, the judge told them he assumed Trump was not agreeing to the restrictions and therefore would not be speaking.

"MEAN & NASTY," Trump wrote of the judge's decision on his Truth Social platform. Trump indicated he will still attend Thursday's court proceeding and reiterated his desire to "personally do the closing argument."

The trial could cost Trump hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties and strip him of his ability to do business in New York. He's fighting allegations that his net worth was inflated by billions of dollars on financial statements that helped him secure business loans and insurance.

The former president denies any wrongdoing, and he has lambasted the case as a "hoax" and a political attack on him. The judge is a Democrat, as is New York Attorney General Letitia James, who brought the lawsuit.

The trial came after Engoron decided, in a pretrial ruling, that Trump had engaged in fraud for years. The judge ordered at that point that a receiver take control of some of the ex-president's properties, but an appeals court has put that order on hold.

The trial concerns remaining claims of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records. Engoron will decide the verdict.

It's extremely uncommon for people who have lawyers to give their own closing arguments. But Trump's lawyers had signaled privately to the judge last week that the ex-president planned to deliver a summation personally, in addition to arguments from his legal team. James' office objected, saying that the proposal would effectively amount to testimony without cross-examination.

Asia

AS AGREED BY BIDEN, XI

US, Chinese military officers resume talks

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. and Chinese military officers have resumed talks that were frozen after former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in the summer of 2022, a development U.S. officials have said is key to keeping the growing competition between the two great powers from turning into direct conflict.

During the deputy-level talks at the Pentagon, the two parties discussed setting future meetings between their military officers, including potentially scheduling a future meeting between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and newly appointed Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun.

Austin is currently hospitalized due to complications from prostate cancer treatment. He had not been scheduled to attend Tuesday's meeting. Dong is a former naval commander who was appointed in late December after his predecessor, Li Shangfu, was removed from office.

Li was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2018 for buying Russian weapons. After he was named the defense minister in March 2023, the U.S. did not lift the sanctions. No U.S. defense secretary has visited China since Jim Mattis visited in 2018.

The face-to-face meetings follow a call between Gen. CQ Brown Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his counterpart Gen. Liu Zhenli, several weeks ago, which marked the first senior military communications between the U.S. and China since August 2022.

China's delegation at the meeting was headed by Maj. Gen. Song Yanchao, deputy director of the Central Military Commission for international military cooperation. He met with Michael Chase, the Pentagon's deputy assistant secretary of defense for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia.

While administrative in nature, the two-day talks do allow both sides to raise policy concerns. In a readout of the meeting, the Pentagon said that Chase talked about operational safety in the Indo-Pacific and the United States' commitment to "our longstanding 'One China' policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act," the Pentagon said in a readout of the meeting.

"The Department will continue to engage in active discussions with PRC counterparts about future engagements between defense and military officials at multiple levels," the Pentagon said in the readout.

The agreement to resume the military talks was reached between President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping during their summit in San Francisco last November.

In a briefing with reporters prior to the meetings, a senior U.S. defense official said while the resumption of the talks is a good sign, "we're clear-eyed" that significant differences remain between the two militaries, including the implications of China's movement toward a reunification with Taiwan, which could commit the U.S. to aid in Taiwan's defense. The official spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity to provide details ahead of the meeting.

Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taiwan angered China because it claims the island as part of its territory and views visits by foreign government officials as recognition of the island's sovereignty. She was the highest-ranking American official to visit Taiwan in 25 years.

For the past two years, the Pentagon has faced increased difficulty contacting the Chinese military as the number of intercepts between U.S. and Chinese aircraft and ships sharply rose. According to the Pentagon's most recent report on China's military power, Beijing "denied, canceled or ignored" military-to-military communications and meetings with the Pentagon for much of the past two years. The report warned that the lack of such talks "raises the risk of an operational incident or miscalculation spiraling into crisis or conflict."

Kim calls S. Korea principal enemy as rhetoric sharpens in US election year

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called South Korea "our principal enemy" and threatened to annihilate it if provoked, as he escalates his inflammatory rhetoric in an election year in South Korea and the U.S.

The White House meanwhile said it has evidence that Russia had fired at Ukraine additional ballistic missiles provided by North Korea. The U.S., South Korea and their partners issued a statement Wednesday condemning both North Korea and Russia over the missile transfer.

Experts say Kim will likely further raise animosities by test-firing more missiles to try to raise stakes in the standoff with his rivals and influence the results of South Korea's parliamentary elections in April and the U.S. presidential election in November.

During tours of munitions factories this week, Kim said it's time to define South Korea "as a state most hostile" toward North Korea because of its long-running attempts to topple the North's socialist system. He said North Korea must bolster its nuclear war deterrent, the North's official Korean Central News Agency reported Wednesday.

If South Korea dares to use its military force against North Korea, Kim said, "We will have no hesitation in annihilating (South Korea) by mobilizing all means and forces in our hands," according to KCNA.

He has made similar threats recently, and analysts say Kim likely hopes that South Korea's liberal opposition, which is seeking reconciliation with North Korea, would win the April elections. Kim apparently also believes he can win U.S. concessions if former President Donald Trump returns to the White House, analysts said. Kim and Trump met three times as part of high-stakes nuclear diplomacy in 2018-19.

There are concerns that North Korean provocations could trigger limited clashes between the two Koreas along their heavily armed border.

Last Friday, North Korea fired artillery shells near the disputed western sea boundary with South Korea, prompting South Korea to stage its own firing drills in the same area. South Korea accused North Korea of continuing with firing drills in the area over the weekend.

Three bloody naval skirmishes between the Koreas have occurred along the disputed sea boundary since 1999, and two attacks blamed on North Korea killed 50 South Koreans in the area in 2010.

World

Zelenskyy says Russia can be stopped

AP

In this photo provided by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Office, Lithuania's President Gitanas Nauseda, left, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attend a welcoming ceremony in Presidential Courtyard, Vilnius, Lithuania, Jan. 10, 2024.

» But Kyiv badly needs more air defense systems

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP)—Ukraine has shown the world that Russia's military can be stopped, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday as he began a visit to the Baltic nations in search of more help for his country against the Kremlin's larger and better-supplied forces in the 22-month-old invasion.

Speaking in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, Zelenskyy said Ukraine still must bolster its air defenses against Russia's intensified missile and drone onslaughts and replenish its ammunition supplies as long-range strikes become the main feature of this winter's fighting.

"We have proven that Russia can be stopped, that deterrence is possible," he said after talks with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda on his first foreign trip of the year.

The massive Russian barrages—more than 500 drones and missiles were fired between Dec. 29 and Jan. 2, according to officials in Kyiv—are using up Ukraine's weapons stockpiles, however. The escalation is stretching Ukraine's air defense resources and leaving the country vulnerable unless it can secure further weapons supplies.

"We lack modern air defense systems badly," Zelenskyy said, noting that they are "what we need the most."

He acknowledged, however, that stockpiles are low in countries that could provide such materiel. "Warehouses are empty. And there are many challenges to world defense," he said.

Ukraine hopes to accelerate development of its domestic defense industry and establish joint projects with foreign governments to speed up ammunition and weapons production.

Ukrainian officials traveling with Zelenskyy signed several documents on cooperation on joint arms production. Similar agreements are expected in the other Baltic countries Zelenskyy is expected to visit this week.

Nauseda said Lithuania will send ammunition, generators and detonation systems to Ukraine this month, and in February will provide armored personnel carriers. It has approved 200 million euros ($219 million) in support for Kyiv, he said.

The focus of his two-day trip to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Zelenskyy said on his official Telegram channel, will be security concerns, Ukraine's hopes to join the European Union and NATO, and building partnerships in drone production and electronic warfare capacities.

Israeli military says it found traces of hostages in underground tunnel

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP)—The Israeli military said Wednesday it has found evidence that hostages were present in an underground tunnel in the Gaza Strip city of Khan Younis, which has become the focus of Israel's ground offensive.

The military showed the tunnel to journalists who were escorted into a neighborhood near the ruins of destroyed homes and streets. A corrugated tin hut covered the tunnel's entrance in a residential yard.

A makeshift ladder led to the narrow underground pathway, about 2.5 meters (8 feet) below. The tunnel was hot and humid, with walls lined with concrete and electrical wires. Farther inside was a bathroom, where the military said it found evidence that hostages had been there, including their DNA.

"Hostages were held here in this tunnel system," said Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the army's chief spokesman.

Hagari offered no details on what exactly was found in the tunnel, nor did he say when the hostages were there or identify them. He did not say if they were known to be dead or alive.

In a later statement to the media, he said the captives were held in "difficult conditions," without elaborating.

Several hostages freed in a cease-fire deal in late November described being held inside tunnels, which Hamas has laid throughout the Gaza Strip and which Israel says have long been used to smuggle weapons and fighters throughout the blockaded territory.

The tunnel was found in a part of the city that appears to have endured heavy fighting. The nearby residence was badly damaged.

In another building, the walls were blasted out of several apartments. Large mounds of dirt surrounded the area, apparently from Israeli bulldozers searching for buried explosives. A tank was parked outside an empty school, where an Israeli flag was hung from the exterior walls. The sound of what appeared to be a drone buzzed overhead, and gunfire could be heard in the distance.

Off the Wall

DURING A COLD SNAP IN POLAND

Dog shelter gets warm response to appeal for homes for its pups

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—With a deep freeze approaching, an animal shelter in Poland sent out an urgent appeal to people to adopt or at least temporarily shelter some of its dogs until the dangerous cold spell passes.

The result of what it called "Operation Frost" took the shelter workers by surprise. Over the weekend, people arrived in droves, waited in lines for hours and ended up taking home 120 pups, the shelter's deputy manager Małgorzata Pałetko said on the TVN24 broadcaster.

The KTOZ Shelter for Homeless Animals sent out its appeal on Friday as temperatures were forecast to fall to around minus 20 degrees Celsius (minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of southern Poland, where Krakow is located. It said it had about 300 dogs, but not all could fit indoors and some were in outdoor pens. It appealed for temporary help so all that all of the furry ones under its care could find space inside.

On Sunday, the shelter announced that it was suspending the operation because it was able to fit all its dogs safely in the warmth, and asked the public to help other shelters who needed similar assistance.

Time running out for old boat that became a socmed star

INVERNESS, Calif. (AP)—Time is apparently running out for California's "Inverness Shipwreck," an old wooden boat that became an Instagram star as it rotted on a shoreline north of San Francisco.

Recent storms have made a shambles of the forlorn vessel named Point Reyes, which was already deteriorated from the over-attention of visitors to the Marin County coast, San Francisco Bay news media reported this week.

"The National Park Service is aware that additional damage occurred to the vessel as a result of the most recent storms and tides," Point Reyes National Seashore officials said in a statement to the SFGATE news site. "While we recognize that this is a local landmark and destination, the NPS is evaluating options to remove it safely."

The boat was built in the 1940s and was used for transportation and fishing before it was abandoned years ago, aground near the community of Inverness on a section of the Tomales Bay shoreline that is part of the Point Reyes National Seashore.

It then became a tourist draw and a darling of social media. Instagram alone has more than 5,500 images of the Point Reyes, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Now, the scene that caught the eyes of so many photographers is just about gone.

Jim Fox, chief of the local volunteer fire department, told the Chronicle that the boat is a dangerous nuisance.

"It's much more dangerous than it used to be," he said. "As the fire chief, I would just as soon people not come out because someone's going to get hurt."

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

A man who claimed to be selling Queen Elizabeth II's walking stick is sentenced for fraud

LONDON (AP)—A 26-year-old man who tried to sell what he claimed was a walking stick used by the late Queen Elizabeth II has been sentenced for defrauding eBay buyers. Dru Marshall, from Hampshire in southern England, claimed he was a senior footman at Windsor Castle and that the proceeds from the sale of the "antler walking stick" would go to cancer research. The auction had reached 540 pounds ($686) before he cancelled the listing after learning police had launched an investigation, prosecutors said. He was found guilty of fraud by false representation at Southampton Magistrates' Court and sentenced on Monday to a 12-month community order. "Dru Marshall used the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to try and hoodwink the public with a fake charity auction – fueled by greed and a desire for attention," Julie Macey, a senior crown prosecutor, said. "Marshall's scheme was ultimately foiled before he could successfully con any unsuspecting victims.'

Nude man nabbed by police after 'cannonball' plunge into giant aquarium at Bass Pro Shop in Alabama

LEEDS, Alabama (AP)—A man crashed his car outside a Bass Pro Shop in Alabama, stripped down to his birthday suit and plunged into the giant aquarium inside the store, police said. The ordeal happened Thursday night in front of shocked shoppers in the town just outside Birmingham, Leeds Police Chief Paul Irwin said. The 42-year-old Alabama man did a "cannonball" leap into the aquarium and then stood under a waterfall. He left the water to yell at two officers, then dove back into the aquarium, police said. The man eventually climbed over the side of the aquarium and fell to the concrete floor below. Police then apprehended him, the news site Al.com reported. He faces several charges including public lewdness, disorderly conduct and criminal mischief. The man was in the water for about five minutes before officers arrived, Irwin said.

Strays land in doghouse after causing an estimated $350K in damage to cars at Houston dealership

HOUSTON (AP)—A pair of strays have landed in the doghouse after being caught on video causing more than a quarter-million dollars' worth of damage at a Houston car dealership. One dog, described as a bull terrier mix, was captured in early December, and the second, whose breed was not immediately known, was caught Dec. 31, KTRK-TV reported. Both dogs are being held by the Houston animal control shelter, BARC. The dogs were captured on surveillance video scratching the paint and tearing the bumpers off of vehicles in the lot at G Motors, according to the dealership's finance manager, Imran Haq. They caused an estimated $350,000 in damage. Haq and sales manager Gaby Fakhoury contacted BARC when the attacks began in November. They believe the dogs entered the lot by crawling under a fence and that they were chasing stray cats that were hiding under the vehicles. "We have never seen something like this—dogs attacking cars and causing damage," Fakhoury told KTRK.

Science &Technology

Coal miners in N. Dakota unearth a mammoth tusk

AP

In this image provided by Coleman Fredricks, coal miners unearthed a mammoth tusk in May 2023 at the Freedom Mine near Beulah, N.D.

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP)—The first person to spot it was a shovel operator working the overnight shift, eyeing a glint of white as he scooped up a giant mound of dirt and dropped it into a dump truck.

Later, after the truck driver dumped the load, a dozer driver was ready to flatten the dirt but stopped for a closer look when he, too, spotted that bit of white.

Only then did the miners realize they had unearthed something special: a 7-foot-long mammoth tusk that had been buried for thousands of years.

"We were very fortunate, lucky to find what we found," said David Straley, an executive of North American Coal, which owns the mine.

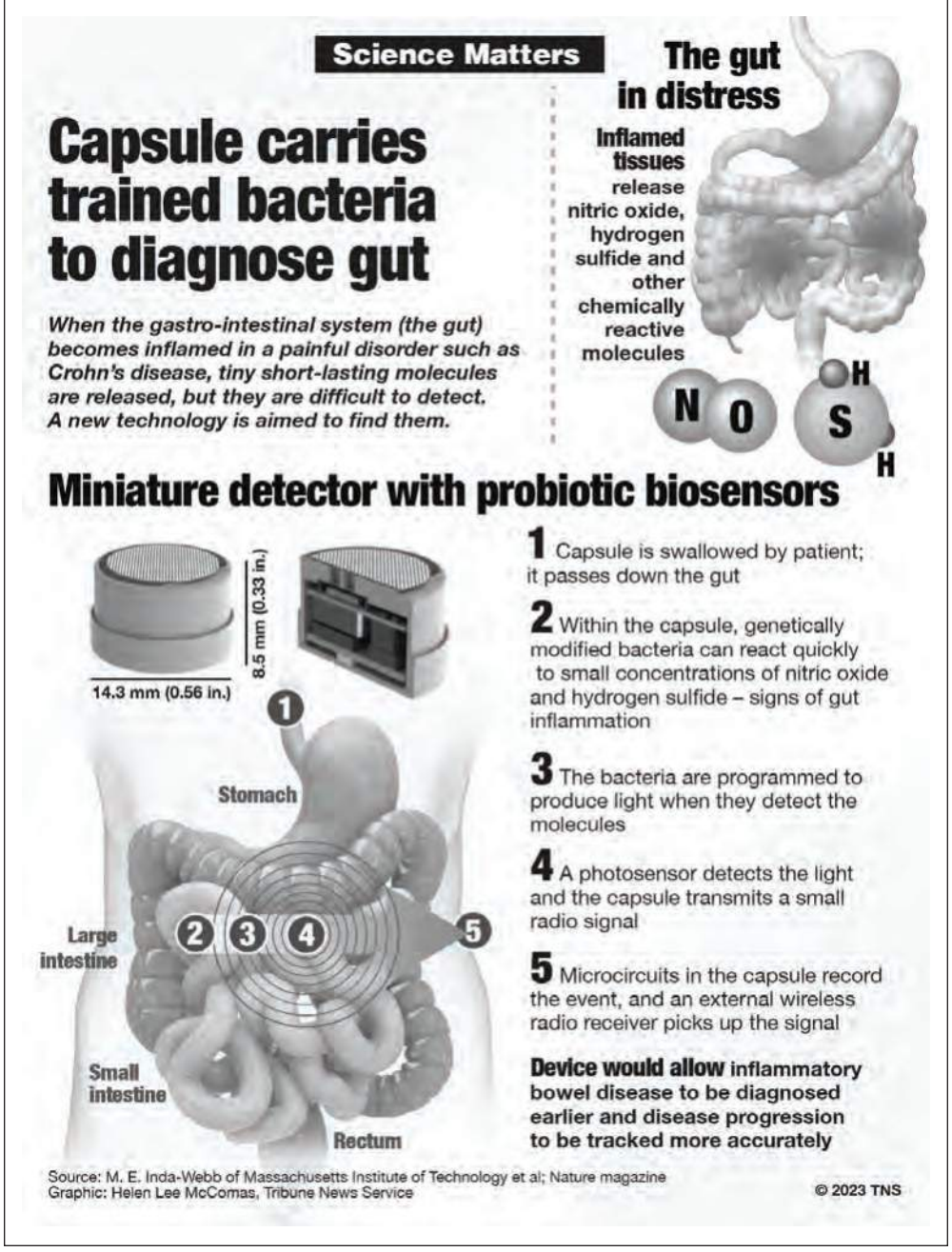
The miners unearthed the tusk from an old streambed, about 40 feet (12.1 meters) deep, at the Freedom Mine near Beulah, North Dakota. The 45,000-acre (18,210-hectare) surface mine produces up to 16 million tons (14.5 million metric tons) of lignite coal per year.

After spotting the tusk, the crews stopped digging in the area and called in experts, who estimated it to be 10,000 to 100,000 years old.

Jeff Person, a paleontologist with the North Dakota Geologic Survey, was among those to respond. He expressed surprise that the mammoth tusk hadn't suffered more damage, considering the massive equipment used at the site.

"It's miraculous that it came out pretty much unscathed," Person said.

A subsequent dig at the discovery site found more bones. Person described it as a "trickle of finds," totaling more than 20 bones, including a shoulder blade, ribs, a tooth and parts of hips, but it's likely to be the most complete mammoth found in North Dakota, where it's much more common to dig up an isolated mammoth bone, tooth or piece of a tusk.


Science Matters
Capsule carries trained bacteria to diagnose gut
When the gastro-intestinal system (the gut) becomes inflamed in a painful disorder such as Crohn's disease, tiny short-lasting molecules are released, but they are difficult to detect. A new technology is aimed to find them.
The gut in distress
Inflamed tissues release nitric oxide, hydrogen sulfide and other chemically reactive molecules
N O S H H
Miniature detector with probiotic biosensors
14.3 mm (0.56 in.)
8.5 mm (0.33 in.)
Stomach
Large intestine
Small intestine
Rectum
1 Capsule is swallowed by patient; it passes down the gut
2 Within the capsule, genetically modified bacteria can react quickly to small concentrations of nitric oxide and hydrogen sulfide – signs of gut inflammation
3 The bacteria are programmed to produce light when they detect the molecules
4 A photosensor detects the light and the capsule transmits a small radio signal
5 Microcircuits in the capsule record the event, and an external wireless radio receiver picks up the signal
Device would allow inflammatory bowel disease to be diagnosed earlier and disease progression to be tracked more accurately
Source: M. E. Inda-Webb of Massachusetts Institute of Technology et al; Nature magazine
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service
© 2023 TNS

Life & Style

Music streams hit 4 trillion in '23. Global acts — and Taylor Swift — fueled growth

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Listened to more music last year? You're not alone.

The global music industry surpassed 4 trillion streams in 2023, a new single-year record, Luminate's 2023 Year-End Report found.

Global streams were also up 34% from last year, reflective of an increasingly international music marketplace.

Stateside, three genres saw the biggest growth in 2023: country (23.7%), Latin (which encompasses all Latin musical genres, up 24.1%) and world (a catchall that includes J-pop, K-pop and Afrobeats, up 26.2%.)

It seems that more Americans are listening to non-English music. By the end of 2023, Luminate found that Spanish-language music's share of the top 10,000 songs streamed in the U.S. grew 3.8%, and English-language music's share dropped 3.8%.

Under the Latin umbrella, regional Mexican music saw massive growth. The genre term—which encompasses mariachi, banda, corridos, norteño, sierreño and other styles—grew 60% in U.S. on-demand audio streams, accounting for 21.9 billion. Four of the six Latin artists to break 1 billion audio streams in the U.S. were Mexican acts: Peso Pluma, Eslabon Armado, Junior H, and Fuerza Regida, who also placed in the top 125 artists streamed.

Armado and Peso Pluma's "Ella Baila Sola" surpassed a billion streams on Spotify in less than a year and became the first regional Mexican Top 10 hit on Billboard's all-genre Hot 100, peaking at No. 4—later, Bad Bunny's collaboration with Grupo Frontera, "Un x100to," hit No. 5.

As for the Taylor Swift of it all: Time's 2023 Person of the Year made up 1.79% of the U.S. market, Luminate found, accounting for 1 in every 78 U.S. on-demand audio streams.

Her dominance is reflected in Luminate's 2023 top albums chart, where Swift accounts for five of the top 10 albums in the U.S.

However, when it comes to overall music consumption in the U.S.—even with the success of Swift and the massive successes of country music and non-English language programming—hip-hop continues to rule, accounting for 25.5% of all streams.

Aaron Rodgers denies implying Jimmy Kimmel tied to Epstein

NEW YORK (AP)—New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers denied he implied comic Jimmy Kimmel was a pedophile and condemned those who do, but he stopped short of apologizing for his role in escalating their burgeoning feud.

Rodgers

Kimmel

Rodgers returned to ESPN's "The Pat McAfee Show" on Tuesday for his weekly appearance and addressed comments he made the week before that appeared to suggest Kimmel's name might appear on a list of associates of Jeffrey Epstein, a millionaire accused of sex trafficking involving underage victims before he died by suicide.

"Any type of name calling is ridiculous and I'm not calling him (a pedophile), and neither should you," Rodgers said on the show Tuesday.

The feud between ABC's late-night star and Rodgers, who regularly appears on the daily ESPN show, has proven embarrassing for The Walt Disney Co., the parent company to both television networks.

Rodgers criticized Mike Foss, an ESPN executive who oversees McAfee's show, for saying that Rodgers had made "a dumb and factually inaccurate joke" about Kimmel.

"Mike, you're not helping," Rodgers said. "You're not helping because I just read earlier exactly what I said. This is the game plan of the media and this is what they do: They try to cancel, you know, and it's not just me."

Rodgers last week said a lot of people, "including Jimmy Kimmel," are really hoping that a list of Epstein's associates doesn't come out publicly. Kimmel, who has denied any association with Epstein, threatened Rodgers with a lawsuit for the comment and said the NFL star was putting his family in danger.

Rodgers suggested that people were reading too much into what he said, that he was not stupid enough to accuse Kimmel of being a pedophile.

SAG Awards nominate 'Barbie,' 'Oppenheimer,' snub DiCaprio

NEW YORK (AP)—The 30th Screen Actors Guild Awards on Wednesday heaped nominations on "Oppenheimer," "Barbie" and "American Fiction," while snubbing Leonardo DiCaprio for best male actor.

As they were at the Golden Globes, Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" and Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" were again the lead nominees. Each film picked up four nods including best ensemble. Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling were nominated for their performances in "Barbie," while Cillian Murphy, Robert Downey Jr. and Emily Blunt received nods for "Oppenheimer."

Barbenheimer continues to rule Hollywood's awards season, just as it did the summer box office.

Cord Jefferson's "American Fiction" got the biggest momentum boost, landing three nods: best ensemble, Jeffrey Wright for best male actor and Sterling K. Brown for supporting male actor.

Along with those three films, Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Blitz Bazawule's "The Color Purple" were nominated for best ensemble, the guild's top award.

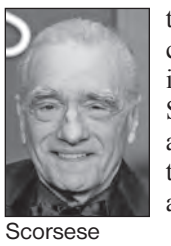
Most notably left out of that group was Yorgos Lanthimos' "Poor Things," which on Sunday won best comedy/musical at the Golden Globes. The film's star, Emma Stone, was nominated for best female actor while Willem Dafoe (but not Mark Ruffalo) was nominated for best supporting male actor.

Directors Guild nominates Greta Gerwig, Christopher Nolan, and Martin Scorsese

NEW YORK (AP)—Christopher Nolan, Greta Gerwig and Martin Scorsese have been nominated by the Directors Guild for its top award.

The nominations to the 76th DGA Awards, which followed those by the Screen Actors Guild earlier Wednesday, went as expected. The other two nominees for the guild's top award, for outstanding directorial achievement, are Alexander Payne for "The Holdovers" and Yorgos Lanthimos for "Poor Things."

Nolan's nomination, for "Oppenheimer," is his fifth DGA nod though he's never won before. Gerwig, nominated for "Barbie," was previously nominated for 2017's "Lady Bird." Scorsese's nomination for "Killers of the Flower Moon" is his 13th DGA nod; he has previously won for 2006's "The Departed" and for the series "Boardwalk Empire."


Scorsese

The Directors Guild nominees often closely align with those of the Academy Awards. Over the past two decades, the winner of the DGA award has nearly always also triumphed at the Oscars. Last year, Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert won both awards for "Everything Everywhere All at Once."

The DGA's nominees for first-time feature filmmaker went to Cord Jefferson for "American Fiction," Manuela Martelli for "Chile '76"," Noora Niasari for "Shayda," A.V. Rockwell for "A Thousand and One" and Celine Song for "Past Lives."

The guild earlier on Tuesday announced other categories. The DGA nominations for best documentary are: "20 Days in Mariupol," "Bobi Wine: The People's President," "Beyond Utopia," "Kokomo City" and "Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie." HBO's "Succession" led the TV nominations, with four out of five nominations for direction.

76th annual DGA Awards will be held Feb. 10.

Abused spouse believes time to escape is near

DEAR ABBY: I have been with my abusive husband for almost 30 years. I made several attempts to leave him, which resulted in him stalking me and threatening to seriously harm me and our children. Despite all his threats and abuse, I was forced to allow him to take our children unsupervised. I would end up going back so I could be present when he was around the children.

Our youngest just moved out and, surprisingly, my husband has calmed down. I am going to leave, and I'm looking for places out of state where he won't be able to find me. Honestly, I'm terrified. How do I move somewhere new and start over alone?

ANONYMOUS IN THE U.S.

DEAR ANONYMOUS: Because you feel you may be in danger if you follow through with your plan to leave your abuser and start a new life, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Its toll-free phone number is: 800-799-7233. The people there can help you formulate a safe way to escape. I wish you good luck and a MUCH happier life.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I work nine hours a day in a mental health clinic talking to the clients and doing billing and collections among many other things. I love my job. The problem is that when I step outside to take a break, I want it to be my quiet time.

Most people say a quick "hi," and that's fine, but a man in the business downstairs from me comes out and chats every time. He calls me by the wrong name (which I have not corrected) and talks while I respond with the bare minimum to show I'm not interested. Is there a nice way to say I am not interested in his company while I am on break?

DECOMPRESSING IN WISCONSIN

DEAR DECOMPRESSING: Yes, but it will take backbone on your part. The next time you see this person, tell him there are two things about you he needs to know. They are: Your name isn't "Joan," and when you take a break from the pressure of your job, you would like to do it ALONE.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My wife's sister died 14 months ago at the young age of 52. Since then, my brother-in-law has been texting and calling my wife constantly. He is grieving, and his alcohol problem has gotten worse. I have tried to be patient about their communication, but I'm finding myself getting jealous. What's your advice?

BOTHERED IN ILLINOIS

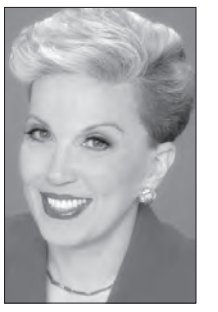
DEAR BOTHERED: Have a talk with your wife about this. She is grieving the loss of her sister as well as trying to help her widowed brother-in-law. Put your jealousy aside, at least for now, and suggest she join a grief support group.

As to your brother-in-law, understand that his drinking problem won't resolve itself until he admits he has one and decides to join a support group or to dry out in rehab. You would be within your rights to point that out to him, as long as you do it with compassion rather than anger.

■■■

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

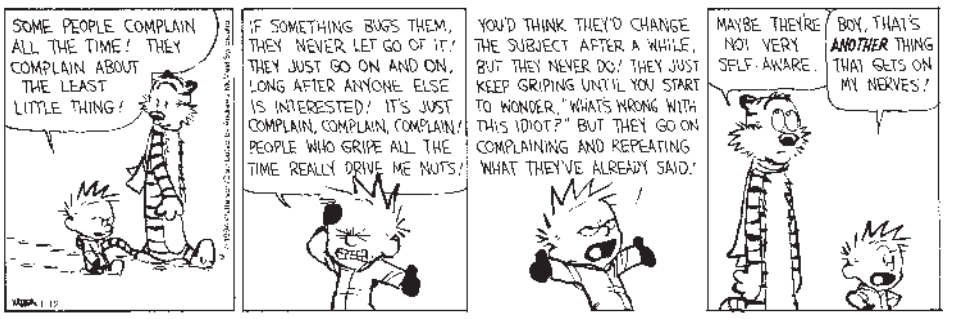


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


SOME PEOPLE COMPLAIN ALL THE TIME! THEY COMPLAIN ABOUT THE LEAST LITTLE THING!
IF SOMETHING BUGS THEM, THEY NEVER LET GO OF IT! THEY JUST GO ON AND ON, LONG AFTER ANYONE ELSE IS INTERESTED! IT'S JUST COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN! PEOPLE WHO GRIPE ALL THE TIME REALLY DRIVE ME NUTS!
YOU'D THINK THEY'D CHANGE THE SUBJECT AFTER A WHILE, BUT THEY NEVER DO! THEY JUST KEEP GRIPING UNTIL YOU START TO WONDER, "WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS IDIOT?" BUT THEY GO ON COMPLAINING AND REPEATING WHAT THEY'VE ALREADY SAID!
MAYBE THEY'RE NOT VERY SELF-AWARE.
BOY, THAT'S ANOTHER THING THAT GETS ON MY NERVES!

Garfield®

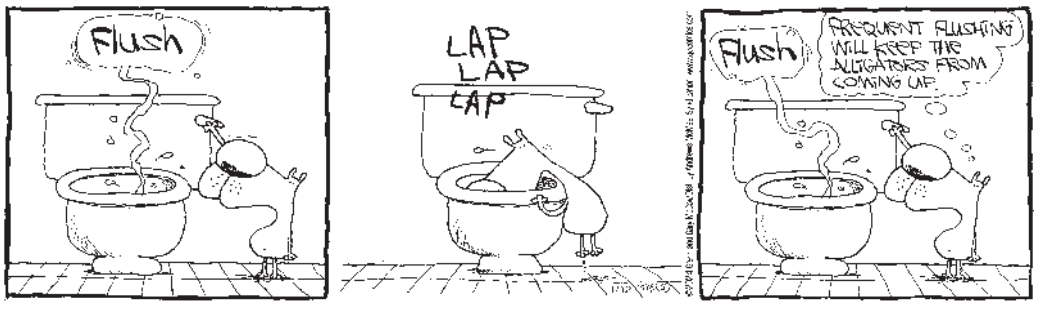
By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

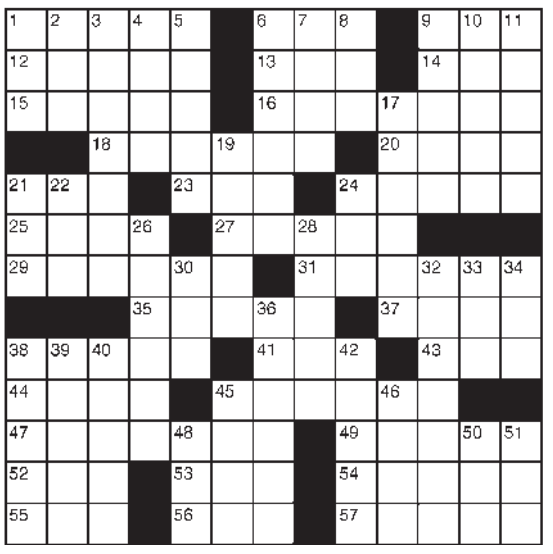
ACROSS
1 Platters
6 Aries
9 — Zedong
12 Popular typeface
13 Mayo ingredient
14 Corn serving
15 Virile
16 Java neighbor
18 2009 Hilary Swank biopic
20 Lake bird
21 Dugout item
23 Director Howard
24 Together (with)
25 Like lemons
27 "All kidding —"
29 "Doctor Zhivago" star
31 Acting ruler
35 Commercial cow
37 North Sea feeder
38 Diving bird
41 L-P link
43 Bond rating
44 Green land
45 Intensify
47 Strauss opera
49 Boxer's dream
52 Moment
53 Insult
54 Bankrupt energy company
55 Superlative suffix
56 CIA operative
57 Distributed, as cards

DOWN
1 Weir
2 Glass of public radio
3 "My Way" singer
4 Tranquil
5 More cagey
6 Pine products
7 Oaxaca water
8 "Ben-Hur" studio
9 "I'm with you!"
10 Brother of Moses
11 Borneo ape, for short
17 Claim
19 Avoids work
21 "Dynamite" band
22 Satisfied sigh
24 Citrus drink
26 Celebrated "Jeopardy!" host
28 Cara or Castle
30 Land in la mer
32 Hyundai model
33 Cagers' gp.
34 Bubble —
36 "Whatever works"
38 Gaggle members
39 Ticks off
40 Upright
42 Chose
45 Plumbing problem
46 Aachen article
48 Pro Bowl stats
50 Online guffaw
51 Tolkien creature

Solution time: 25 mins.

T	A	S	S		W	C	T		S	W	U	M
A	D	E	N		I	R	A		H	I	I	O
T	A	R	O		S	A	L		A	N	N	E
A	M	B	U	S	H		C	A	V	E	A	T
			I	I	L			I	L	L		
W	E	B	S		I	N	T	E	R	I	M	S
A	L	A			S	A	O			S	O	S
D	I	C	T	A	T	E	D		S	T	A	T
		K	I	N			O	W	L			
R	O	L	L	O	N		L	E	A	V	E	S
E	V	I	L		A	H	I		V	I	D	A
D	E	S	I		G	I	S		I	V	E	S
O	H	I	S		S	A	I		C	A	N	S

Yesterday's answer 1-12



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Zayn Malik, 31; Rachael Harris, 56; Oliver Platt, 64; Howard Stern, 70.

Happy Birthday: Expand your awareness and explore possibilities. Contact experts and make domestic changes to add to your comfort and happiness. Keep your emotions in check, and listen to complaints before you act. How you handle financial and emotional situations will determine the outcome. Look at the big picture and do what's best for everyone. Don't let extravagance and overreacting become your downfall. Your numbers are 9, 16, 21, 28, 35, 43, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Attend a reunion or event that connects you with people who share your interests or background. Offering insight will open a two-way conversation that will enhance your beliefs and add value to something you want to pursue. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Don't promise more than you can deliver, and you'll do remarkably well. Opportunities are heading your way, and picking up skills will position you for success. Update your resume or find a trendy new way to promote what you have to offer. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Refuse to let anyone take over or ruin your day. Go where the action is and show everyone what you have to offer. Someone you least expect will show signs of jealousy. Don't give anyone the chance to put you down or damage your reputation. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Money, contracts and negotiations matter. Don't put your future in someone else's hands. Take the initiative and be bold, and you will get what you want. Now is not the time to be shy; it's time to build confidence by showing everyone what you can offer. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Don't reveal too much information. Show compassion and be a good listener, but keep your personal life and opinions to yourself. The best way forward is to use your charm and skills to help. A reunion or chance meeting will lead to an exciting friendship. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Taking an educational course will lead to something new and exciting. Having an active role in your community will encourage networking and the potential to get ahead through the connections you make. Question the validity of something someone close to you says. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Don't settle for less when you want more. Align yourself with people who share your concerns and interests and offer benefits to help you reach your objective. Stop vacillating; take control and put your plan in motion. Love is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Be aware of how others react. An emotional incident can influence a change you want to pursue. Make it clear what you are willing to bring to the table to make your plan work. Put your energy into whatever brings the highest returns. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Push hard for what you want, but don't promise something you cannot honor. There will be a fine line between truth and false information, making it vital that you are explicit regarding what you are willing to do and what you expect in return. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Don't engage in extravagant pastimes. Stick to a healthy, moderate lifestyle. Stay focused on being positive and achieving something that will help you advance. Make changes at home that will ease stress. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Emotional situations will escalate quickly. Avoid joint financial ventures, lending to or borrowing from a friend or relative, and shared expenses. Concentrate on personal gain, self-improvement and finding out the truth or facts before you share information. How you conduct yourself reflects your status. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Pay attention to detail. Put your energy into something meaningful. Say no to those trying to lead you astray or attempting to take advantage of what you have to offer. Use your discipline, connections and money to further your goals. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are outgoing, helpful and courteous. You are prompt and motivated.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave*

1					2	9		
5	6		7			2		
3		8	9				5	
7		6						9
2				7		1		
	4					5	7	
				6				
9				5	1			
			8					3

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/12

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

2	6	7	5	3	8	4	1	9
8	3	1	4	9	7	6	2	5
5	4	9	6	2	1	8	3	7
3	1	5	2	6	4	7	9	8
4	7	2	9	8	5	3	6	1
9	8	6	7	1	3	5	4	2
6	9	4	8	7	2	1	5	3
7	2	3	1	5	6	9	8	4
1	5	8	3	4	9	2	7	6

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/11

©2012 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

DO YOU TAKE AMEX? Solution: 11 letters

B	R	E	A	K	F	A	S	T	T	E	L	L	A	W
A	R	E	S	E	R	V	A	T	I	O	N	S	G	I
G	E	A	B	A	N	K	E	S	N	E	P	X	E	R
G	S	M	N	A	I	R	L	I	N	E	L	T	N	E
A	T	C	P	D	T	C	A	C	C	E	S	S	C	L
G	A	E	R	L	C	E	H	A	V	Ⓓ	T	E	Y	E
E	U	M	S	U	O	O	R	A	D	Ⓛ	O	V	D	S
N	R	O	E	H	O	Y	R	N	R	Ⓞ	R	N	S	S
A	A	C	E	F	O	T	E	P	R	Ⓖ	E	I	T	S
C	N	N	F	Y	R	T	T	E	O	P	E	O	I	S
I	T	I	E	O	W	I	T	G	S	R	C	D	F	E
R	C	N	P	O	D	A	O	L	D	K	A	A	E	R
E	O	R	R	E	I	L	O	U	N	G	E	T	N	P
M	I	K	R	L	E	T	N	U	O	C	C	A	E	X
A	R	C	O	M	M	E	R	C	I	A	L	S	B	E

©2021 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 1/12

Access, Account, Agency, Airline, Airport, American, Baggage, Bank, Benefits, Brand, Breakfast, Charge, Commercial, Corporate, Credit, Data, Employee, Expense, Express, Fees, Gold, Income, Invest, Logo, Lounge, Money, Network, Office, Rebate, Reservations, Restaurant, Retail, Spend, Stock, Store, Tour, Travel, Wallet, Wireless

Yesterday's Answer: Freedom Is

The NEW **TELEWORD VINTAGE COLLECTION EDITION #1** can be purchased on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Alabama's Nick Saban retires after 7 national titles

By JOHN ZENOR
AP SPORTS WRITER

» Most in major college football history

Nick Saban's coaching reign has come to an end. His dominance over college football, however, will forever linger in lore.

Saban, who won seven national championships—more than any major college football coach—and turned Alabama back into a national powerhouse that shattered an Associated Press poll record for most consecutive seasons at No. 1, announced his retirement Wednesday.

"The University of Alabama has been a very special place to Terry and me," Saban said in a statement. "It is not just about how many games we won and lost, but it's about the legacy and how we went about it. We always tried to do it the right way."

Saban, 72, restored a Crimson Tide program once ruled by Paul "Bear" Bryant to the top of college football after taking over in 2007. As he stacked his wins, Saban's celebrity status reached royalty levels in the state of Alabama.

For a time, he was the sport's overlord and there was little that could be done to stop him.

Saban won six of his titles during his 17 seasons at Alabama. He won his first with LSU in 2003. His Tide teams were ranked No. 1 in the AP poll in a remarkable 15 straight seasons, breaking the old record of seven held by Miami.

Saban's wife, Terry, posted about their "incredible run" at Alabama on the Facebook page for Nick's Kids Foundation.

AP

Alabama head coach Nick Saban leaves the field after the Southeastern Conference championship NCAA college football game between Georgia and Alabama, Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021, in Atlanta.

"We hope that the Saban legacy will be about helping others and making a positive difference in people's lives as well as the winning tradition on the field," Terry Saban wrote.

Saban's tutelage helped launch the head coaching careers of Georgia's Kirby Smart, Texas' Steve Sarkisian and Mississippi's Lane Kiffin, among others.

He finished just shy of the top in his final season, leading the Tide from a shaky start to a Southeastern Conference championship and back into the College Football Playoff before falling in overtime to Michigan in a semifinal game at the Rose Bowl.

Alabama athletic director Greg Byrne called him "one of the greatest coaches of all time, in any sport."

Saban led the Tide to nine SEC championships and won his first national title at Alabama with a 14-0 season in 2009. Titles came again in 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2020. He also won the SEC with LSU in 2001 and 2003.

After a 7-6 debut in 2007, Saban won at least 10 games in his final 16 seasons.

It wasn't until the rise of Dabo Swinney's Clemson teams in the late 2010s and later Smart's Georgia Bulldogs that any school could be considered a consistent threat to the Tide.

Saban has stepped away as the fabric of college football undergoes dramatic change. Colorado's Deion Sanders, a coach who has sought to capitalize on the intervention of players profiting financially from their play on the field, said on social media "College Football just lost the GOAT."

"WOW! I knew it would happen 1 day soon but not this soon," he wrote. "The game has change so much that it chased the GOAT away. College football let's hold up our mirrors and say HONESTLY what u see."

Terry Saban addressed the changes to college football in her post, referencing her husband's famed "process."

"The rules for the game of football may change, but the 'process' will never go out of style: hard work, discipline, the relentless pursuit of a worthy goal, not cutting corners, and doing things the right way for the sake of constant personal improvement, not for the scoreboard," she wrote.

Saban made a two-year foray into the NFL with the Miami Dolphins before returning to college to revive one of the nation's most storied programs, which hadn't won a national title in 15 years. Saban is 297-71-1 as a college head coach, with stops at Toledo, Michigan State and LSU. But Alabama is where he cemented his status as one of college football's greatest coaches.

He coached Alabama's first four Heisman Trophy winners and numerous NFL players, going 206-29, a winning clip of 87.7%. His teams produced 44 first-round draft picks, including last year's No. 1 quarterback Bryce Young.

During that span, he also adapted to the changing times of up-tempo offenses, churning out high-scoring teams after winning with some of the nation's best defenses, along with the new NIL and transfer rules.

He led Toledo to a Mid-American Conference championship in 1990, his lone season as that program's coach. Saban worked as Bill Belichick's defensive coordinator with the Cleveland Browns for four seasons before becoming the first Michigan State coach to lead his first three teams to bowl games.

"I think he's the greatest coach in the history of football," Michigan State basketball coach and longtime Saban friend Tom Izzo said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "There are a lot of great coaches, but what he's done and the consistency that he did it—in an era where so many people and things are coming at you—is remarkable."

Saban's latest team dealt with plenty of adversity early, including a loss to Texas, but rebounded with the emergence of quarterback Jalen Milroe to upset then-No. 1 Georgia in the SEC championship game.

Saban didn't sound like a coach looking to give up the job any time soon after the game. But it wasn't a bad way to go, even without the title.

"This is one of the most amazing seasons in Alabama football history in terms of where this team came from, what they were able to accomplish and what they were able to do, winning the SEC championship, and really, really proud of this group," he said. "I just wish that I could have done more as a coach to help them be successful and help them finish, and all we can do now is learn from the lessons that sometimes failings bring to us."

SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey feels Saban isn't done entirely with college football.

"Knowing Nick? He's not walking away from the game. He's walking away from a role," Sankey said.

Nick Saban's Alabama dynasty fueled 20 years of Southeastern Conference college football dominance

PHOENIX (AP)—While turning Alabama into college football's greatest dynasty, Nick Saban helped the Southeastern Conference become the epicenter of the sport.

Saban retired Wednesday after 17 seasons leading Alabama. He won six national championships with the Crimson Tide and a BCS title with LSU in 22 seasons as a head coach in the SEC.

"We've always had people that set the standard of excellence," said SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey, who was in Phoenix attending the NCAA convention when he heard the news about Saban's retirement.

Sankey compared Saban to SEC greats in other sports such as Skip Bertman, who won five College World Series with LSU baseball, and the late Pat Summitt, who led Tennessee's Lady Vols to eight NCAA basketball championships.

"We've always benefited as a league from people who are high-achievers on all kinds of different campuses. He's helped make us better. Everybody wants that mountaintop. And he's achieved a lot. Since he's been a part of the league we've had I think six or seven different programs that have won national championships."

The SEC had not yet become the most dominant conference in college football when the West Virginia native who had come up in coaching in the Midwest led the Tigers to their first of three national titles this century.

"While I was sad to see him leave LSU in 2004, I was not surprised at all by his unprecedented run at Alabama," said LSU athletic director Scott Woodward, who was an administrator at the school during Saban's time in Baton Rouge.

After Saban left for the NFL after the 2004 season, the conference started to assert itself.

Florida won a national championship under Urban Meyer in 2006 to start a string of seven straight for the SEC.

Saban returned to the conference in 2007 and by 2009 Alabama had replaced Florida as the dominant team not only in the conference but in the country.

Soon Saban's Crimson Tide would become so strong, winning five national championships in a 10-year span and playing in the College Football Playoff championship game two other time, that Sankey said he had to fend off charges of having a one-team league.

"I never thought that was true, but it sets a standard that everyone wants to attain," Sankey said.

Michigan's national title this season snapped the latest string of SEC titles at four straight, including Alabama's most recent in 2020 and Georgia's two in row in 2021 and '22 under former Saban assistant Kirby Smart.

The SEC has won 14 football national championships, starting with LSU's in 2003, and Saban's teams claim half of them.

Seven national titles highlight sterling resume of retiring Alabama's Saban

Career highlights of Nick Saban, the Alabama coach who has decided to retire.

- HEAD COACHING RECORD (Toledo, Michigan State, LSU, Alabama): 297-71-1 (.806 winning percentage, 28 seasons).
- NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS: 2003 (LSU), 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2020 (Alabama).
- CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHIPS: Mid-American (1), Southeastern (11).
- AP COACH OF THE YEAR: Twice (2003, 2008).
- NFL: Miami Dolphins (head coach 2005-06, 15-17 record); Cleveland Browns defensive coordinator (1991-94).
- FIRST-ROUND NFL PICKS COACHED (at Alabama, through 2023): 44. ***(AP)***

Celtics hold off Timberwolves in OT, improve to 18-0 at home

AP

Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum (0) celebrates after making a 3-pointer during overtime of the team's NBA basketball game against the Minnesota Timberwolves, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, in Boston.

BOSTON (AP)—The last time the Timberwolves won in Boston, Kevin Garnett was the starting center—for Minnesota. Alex Rodriguez was in spring training, trying to bounce back from the New York Yankees' historic collapse in the AL Championship Series against the Red Sox.

Garnett's number is hanging from the rafters in the new Boston Garden now, not far from the 2008 NBA championship banner he helped the Celtics win. And Rodriguez, who's now a Timberwolves owner, was sitting courtside on Wednesday night to watch another Boston team break his heart.

Jayson Tatum scored 45 points—14 of them in the fourth quarter and another 12 in overtime—to help the Celtics beat the Timberwolves 127-120 in a matchup of the two conference leaders. Boston improved to 18-0 at home for the first time in franchise history.

"You live for those moments. You want to do whatever you can to help your team win," Tatum said. "I didn't want to lose at home yet. We're still undefeated. The crowd got behind us. The energy got going. That was a fun ballgame toward the end."

Jaylen Brown had 35 points and 11 rebounds for the Celtics. Jrue Holiday scored 12, including a corner 3-pointer off an offensive rebound by Derrick White to cap a 14-3 run that gave Boston a 111-109 lead with 26 seconds left in regulation.

Anthony Edwards hit a pair of free throws to tie it, and Tatum missed an off-balance shot at the buzzer that could have won the game in regulation.

Edwards had 29 points and Karl-Anthony Towns scored 25 with 13 rebounds for Minnesota, which flew in from Orlando in the afternoon because of weather problems that prevented the Timberwolves from traveling Tuesday night.

"We're playing against a young superstar in Anthony Edwards. … It's going to be an opportunity for him to showcase his greatness," Brown said. "My whole thing was, 'Not tonight.'"

The Timberwolves (26-11) have the top record in the Western Conference, trailing only NBA-best Boston (29-8) overall. Minnesota beat the Celtics in overtime in their previous matchup, in November.

"We've got a great memory," Tatum said. "We remember playing those guys in Minnesota. We remember how it felt to lose that game."

Minnesota last won at Boston in March 2005—five months after the Red Sox rallied from a 3-0 deficit in the ALCS to beat Rodriguez's Yankees and then went on to win their first World Series in 86 years. Two years later, the Timberwolves traded Garnett to Boston, where he helped the Celtics snap a 22-year drought—the longest in franchise history—and win the NBA title.

But neither that roster nor any of the 16 other Celtics teams to win it all ever started a season with 18 straight wins at home. The 1957-58 team won its first 17 home games; the 1985-86 Celtics went 40-1 at home overall.

The Celtics have won 25 regular-season home games in a row, going back to last March. (They did lose in Boston during the playoffs, including a Game 7 loss to the Miami Heat in the Eastern Conference finals.)

"There's nothing better than getting the Garden and the crowd to appreciate Celtics basketball," Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said. "Even when we did suck, which we did at times, they kept us in it. It's important to have that relationship with the crowd and the city."

Boston led by nine with eight minutes left in the second quarter and still held a 54-48 edge in the final minute of the half before Minnesota scored the last five points before the break, making it a one-point game when Towns stole the ball and fed Edwards on a fast break just before the buzzer.

Towns scored on the first possession of the second half to give the Timberwolves their first lead. Minnesota led 106-97 with 3:35 left in the fourth before Boston scored 14 of the last 19 points in regulation.

THUNDER 128, HEAT 120

MIAMI (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 28 points, Chet Holmgren added 23 and Oklahoma City used two big second-half runs to beat Miami.

Jalen Williams finished with 19 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds, and Lu Dort scored 14 points and Isaiah Joe added 11. Oklahoma City beat Miami for the second time in the last 10 meetings.

Bam Adebayo led Miami with 25 points, 11 rebounds and six assists. Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored 21 points and Haywood Highsmith had a career-best 19.

Tyler Herro scored 17 points, Nikola Jovic added 15 and Kevin Love had 12 for the Heat. Miami used a late 10-0 run to get within six with 1:08 remaining, but wouldn't score again.

PELICANS 141, WARRIORS 105

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Jonas Valanciunas had 21 points. nine rebounds and a pair of steals, helping New Orleans jump to a big lead on the way to beating Golden State.

Stephen Curry had 15 points and six assists for Golden State coming off a game in which he shot 2 for 14 and missed all nine of his 3-point tries to score nine points—after he'd gone for 25 points or more in the previous four games.

Zion Williamson started for the Pelicans and contributed 19 points, seven assists and five rebounds playing 30 minutes after he began the day questionable because of a bruised right quadriceps.

Moses Moody came off the bench to score 21 points for the struggling Warriors while Klay Thompson finished with 13. Draymond Green's return following a 12-game league suspension can't come soon enough to energize the 2022 champions.

CLIPPERS 126, RAPTORS 120

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kawhi Leonard scored 29 points after agreeing to a three-year contract extension earlier in the day, Paul George added 29, including 15 in the fourth quarter, and Los Angeles rallied for a victory over Toronto.

Immanuel Quickley paced the Raptors with 25 points, RJ Barrett added 24 and Dennis Schroder had 22 as Toronto fell in Crypto.Com Arena for the second straight night after a one-point loss to the Lakers on Tuesday.

The Raptors were missing Pascal Siakam due to back spasms. Toronto has split its six games since acquiring Barrett and Quickley from the New York Knicks.

James Harden (14 points, 11 assists) and Ivica Zubac (12 points, 11 rebounds) both had double-doubles as the Clippers improved to an NBA-best 16-3 since Dec. 1.

JAZZ 124, NUGGETS 111

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Jordan Clarkson had 27 points and nine assists to send the Utah past Denver for its ninth victory in 11 games.

After beating Philadelphia and Milwaukee on the road, Utah earned its third win in five days over an elite team by taking down the defending NBA champions.

Lauri Markkanen added 26 points and 12 rebounds, Collin Sexton scored 22 and John Collins had 15 points for the Jazz (19-20), who shot 55% from the field and finished with 18 fastbreak points.

Nikola Jokic scored 27 points and was nearly perfect shooting - 8 for 9 from the floor and 10 of 12 at the foul line - but didn't get a lot of help. Denver had won six straight road games since a Dec. 6 defeat at the Los Angeles Clippers.

HAWKS 139, 76ERS 132, OT

ATLANTA (AP)—Jalen Johnson hit two tying free throws in overtime and then added a go-ahead 3-pointer with 39 seconds remaining, sending Atlanta over Tyrese Maxey and Philadelphia.

Johnson, who had 25 points and 16 rebounds, added two more free throws with 13 seconds remaining to help close it out.

Maxey had 35 points, nine assists, eight rebounds and four steals. Tobias Harris added 32 points for the 76ers, who played without Joel Embiid and suffered their third straight loss.

KINGS 123, HORNETS 98

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Keegan Murray scored 25 points, Domantas Sabonis had 24 points and 10 rebounds and Sacramento beat Charlotte for its second straight victory.

Former Hornets first-rounder Malik Monk added 20 points for Sacramento. De'Aaron Fox scored 19 points, and Sabonis also had seven assists. The Kings improved to 23-14, getting revenge for a 111-104 home loss to Charlotte last week.

Miles Bridges led the Hornets with 24 points. Terry Rozier added 22, Brandon Miller had 15 and Nick Smith, Jr. 11. Charlotte, at 8-27, has lost 157 man-games because of injury or illness, including starters LaMelo Ball (20), Mark Williams (16), Rozier (11), Gordon Hayward (10).

BULLS 124, ROCKETS 119, OT

CHICAGO (AP)—Coby White scored 30 points and Zach LaVine made a big 3-pointer with 1:46 left in overtime, helping Chicago top Houston.

LaVine finished with 25 points, 13 rebounds, seven assists and three steals in Chicago's third consecutive win. DeMar DeRozan scored 19 points on 5-for-19 shooting, and Nikola Vucevic had 18 points and 15 rebounds.

LaVine and Vucevic were back in the starting lineup and without minute restrictions for their third game back after being sidelined by injuries.

Despite being held scoreless in the first half, Alperen Sengun had 25 points for the Rockets. Fred VanVleet had 20 points and 10 assists, and Jabari Smith Jr. finished with 18 points and 15 rebounds.

PACERS 112, WIZARDS 104

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Myles Turner had 18 points and 13 rebounds and Indiana overcame star guard Tyrese Haliburton's absence to beat Washington for its eight win in nine games.

Haliburton, the NBA assists leader and Indiana scoring leader, strained his left hamstring Monday night in a 133-131 home victory over Boston. He will be re-evaluated in two weeks.

Bruce Brown and Bennedict Mathurin each added 16 points for the Pacers. Obi Toppin added 15 points, and Brown also had nine rebounds and six assists.

Jordan Poole led Washington with 28 points. Corey Kispert had 15 points, all in the first half. Deni Avdija also had 15 in the Wizards' sixth straight loss.

Packers QB Love benefiting from emergence of Green Bay's young receivers

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Jayden Reed and Dontayvion Wicks were coming off relatively disappointing finishes to their college careers when they began their rookie seasons in the NFL. Bo Melton spent much of the past two years toiling on practice squads.

The three of them have emerged as some of Jordan Love's most reliable playmakers while helping the Green Bay Packers make an unlikely postseason appearance. The Packers (9-8) visit the NFC East champion Dallas Cowboys (12-5) on Sunday.

"They're taking advantage of the opportunity they got and they're just trying to go out there and make the most of that," Love said. "And they're doing a really good job of it."

One of the most remarkable elements of Love's debut season as a starter is that he not only is throwing primarily to rookies and second-year pros, but that some of his top options have been in and out of the lineup with injuries.

For instance, Christian Watson caught three touchdown passes in an overtime victory over the Cowboys as a rookie last season, but missed Green Bay's past five games with a hamstring injury. Romeo Doubs did appear in all 17 regular-season games, but went to the hospital with a chest injury during the Packers' 17-9 victory over Chicago on Sunday. Both practiced on a limited basis Wednesday.

If they're unable to go, the Packers will be relying on Reed, Wicks and Melton to help pick up the slack. They've done quite well in that regard so far.

These young receivers credit Love for helping the transition by getting to know each of them. They noted how Love invited offensive players over to his house for dinners and team-bonding sessions on a couple of Mondays this season.

"Jordan just has a knack for every receiver," Melton said. "Our job is to get open as receivers, tight ends, running backs, for all to get open, and Jordan puts the ball right where it's supposed to be every single time."

But the receivers sure have done their part as well.

Green Bay selected Reed from Michigan State in the second round and Wicks out of Virginia in the fifth round of last year's draft. Each of them had produced 1,000-yard seasons in 2021 at their respective school but weren't as productive the following year.

Yet their new teammates realized immediately these rookies had promise.

"I think we knew pretty early on that they were going to be able to make plays when their number is called," Watson said.

Sure enough, both have delivered big rookie seasons.

Reed has 64 receptions for 793 yards and has scored 10 total touchdowns (8 receiving, 2 rushing) to lead the Packers in all three categories. Wicks scored twice in the Bears game and has caught 39 passes for 581 yards and four touchdowns.

"That's my brother," Reed said of Wicks. "I hang out with him outside this building, so we've got that relationship where we can push each other to be better. If we're not doing something the right way, we coach each other."

Melton has been the biggest surprise of all.

The undrafted free agent from Rutgers was signed off the Seattle Seahawks' practice squad in December 2022. He spent most of this season on Green Bay's practice squad but appeared in five games and finally was signed to the active roster on Jan. 1. He has 15 catches for 211 yards and a touchdown during Green Bay's three-game winning streak.

"Coming from practice squad, to on the team to the playoffs, you couldn't draw it up any better," Melton said. "Thank God, for sure."

Green Bay's young receivers haven't won over everyone. Even after Reed, Wicks and Melton combined to catch 15 passes for 235 yards in the victory over Chicago that clinched a playoff berth, Bears safety Jaquan Brisker wasn't impressed.

"I feel like we could have tightened up on the receivers a lot more than we did today," Brisker said afterward. "We gave them too much room. I don't really have no respect for them at all, just to be honest."

Maybe they haven't earned Brisker's respect just yet. But they've sure helped the Packers earn a spot in the postseason.

Now they want to help the NFL's youngest team keep it going.

"It really don't matter about the age," Wicks said. "We step out and we do what we've got to do every week. It's just about preparation and who's going to be the best when it's time to get on the field."

AP

Green Bay Packers wide receiver Jayden Reed (11) celebrates with teammate Bo Melton after catching a 59-yard pass during the second half of an NFL football game against the Chicago Bears Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024, in Green Bay, Wis.

McAfee announces Aaron Rodgers' appearances over for rest of season

By JOE REEDY
AP SPORTS WRITER

Aaron Rodgers' Tuesday appearances on "The Pat McAfee Show" are over for the rest of this NFL season.

Or possibly longer.

McAfee announced at the beginning of his Wednesday show on ESPN that his fourth season of doing a weekly segment with the New York Jets quarterback had concluded.

As his staff applauded in the background, McAfee said a lot of people would be happy to hear that news, including himself.

"With the way it ended, it got real loud. I'm happy that that is not going to be in my mentions going forward, which is great news," McAfee said. "We are very lucky to get a chance to chat with him and learn from him. Some of his thoughts and opinions though do (tick) off a lot of people, and I'm pumped that that is no longer going to be every single Wednesday of my life, which it has been for the last few weeks."

Rodgers implied during a Jan. 2 appearance on McAfee's show that comic Jimmy Kimmel's name might appear on a list of associates of Jeffrey Epstein, a millionaire accused of sex trafficking involving underage victims before he died by suicide.

That escalated a long-running feud between ABC's late-night star and Rodgers. It also proved embarrassing for The Walt Disney Co., the parent company to both networks.

On Tuesday, Rodgers denied he implied the comic Kimmel was a pedophile and condemned those who do, but he stopped short of apologizing for earlier comments.

"Any type of name calling is ridiculous and I'm not calling him (a pedophile), and neither should you," Rodgers said on the show Tuesday.

Rodgers criticized Mike Foss, an ESPN executive who oversees McAfee's show, for saying that Rodgers had made "a dumb and factually inaccurate joke" about Kimmel.

"Mike, you're not helping," Rodgers said. "You're not helping because I just read earlier exactly what I said. This is the game plan of the media and this is what they do: They try to cancel, you know, and it's not just me."

Rodgers last week said a lot of people, "including Jimmy Kimmel," are really hoping that a list of Epstein's associates doesn't come out publicly. Kimmel, who has denied any association with Epstein, threatened Rodgers with a lawsuit for the comment and said the NFL star was putting his family in danger.

Rodgers suggested that people were reading too much into what he said, that he was not stupid enough to accuse Kimmel of being a pedophile.

Kimmel made the first appearance of the year Monday on his late-night show and laced into Rodgers. He said he would accept an apology from Rodgers but didn't expect one.

"A decent person would apologize," Kimmel said. "But he probably won't."

Kimmel called Rodgers "hamster-brained" and said that he got two A's on his report card — "they're both in the name Aaron."

"It might be time to revisit that concussion profile, Aaron," Kimmel said.

Before addressing his specific comments, Rodgers had a lengthy preamble about his grudges against Kimmel, including jokes the comic has made about the quarterback's anti-COVID-19 vaccination comments.

Even after that, he said he didn't care what Kimmel said about him, "but as long as he understands what I actually said and that I'm not accusing him of being on a list ... I'm all for moving forward."

The war of words between Kimmel and Rodgers also brought some tension between McAfee and ESPN. McAfee accused Norby Williamson, ESPN's head of event and studio production, of trying to "sabotage" his program and claimed Williamson had no respect for him.

ESPN said it would handle McAfee's comments internally.

McAfee said on Wednesday that those comments "obviously threw us in the fire as well," but added that he stands by his words.

McAfee is in the first year of a five-year, $85 million agreement where ESPN licenses his self-produced show. That deal was announced last May and McAfee's show debuted on ESPN last September.

ESPN announced last week that the show averaged 886,000 viewers across all platforms (ESPN, YouTube, TikTok). It averages 332,000 alone on ESPN, a 20% increase since its Sept. 7 debut.

NMA recaps 'very successful' 2023

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Athletics had a "very successful" 2023 with events on and off island.

NMA president Ramon Tebuteb said he cannot rate on a scale how 2023 was for the organization, but that "Hiccups are always anticipated. Safety is No. 1 in the scale."

The highlights of the year, he said, was the CNMI's first-time hosting of the 4th edition of the Oceania Cup and Oceania Masters Championships last June. He said the event "highlighted the challenged athletes (special ability athletes) and our Masters folks from the Pacific region."

He said, "Unlike the Pacific Mini Games in which the CNMI hosted and funded in 2022, all expenses at these Championships were funded [through] Oceania Athletics Association and our business partners in the CNMI."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CNMI Oceania Cup athletes pose for a photo last June during the 2023 Oceania Cup at the Oleai Sports Complex.

A tier above that, said Tebuteb, is the "record-breaking feat by distance athlete Tania Tan at the recent 2023 Solomon Games."

On what to look forward to this year, Tebuteb said it's submitted to the Northern Marianas Sports Association its required annual calendar and maintains its course-based plans. "NMA especially aligns its goals and objectives to our regional OAA and World Athletics strategic world plan focusing on more people, more participation, more partners, and more fans," said Tebuteb.

Tebuteb, on behalf of NMA, then thanked multiple entities for the success of their programs, from their private business partners, the athletes and their families who have sacrificed a lot; the volunteers; the media; and DFEMS and Department of Public Safety.

He also thanked the private schools and the Public School System "for your untiring support of our grassroots programs. Thank you to our governing body of sports, NMSA. We look forward to maintaining this relationship heading into 2024."

LA

From page 20

Lam said he feels grateful for getting the chance to play in Australia against elite netters his age.

"I had to play three matches a day including doubles and it was pretty tough but it was a great experience. Specially the tournament was on the grass court which helped me a lot to learn how to play well on the grass."

Lam left Saipan with CNMI national tennis coach Jeff Race last Jan. 1 for the 2024 Margaret Cup Boys Premier Series.

He won't be back on Saipan soon as he's seeing action in the 2024 Victorian Grasscourt Championship and will play in the boys 14 division of the Australian Open starting Jan. 22.

Lam has also been invited to train at Lavie Tennis Academy in New Zealand in February. He's been picked to represent the CNMI in the Davis Cup with coach Colin Ramsey. "So, I will probably be back to Saipan on March," he said.

Race said Lam showed his mettle in the Australia tournament and was probably one of the best boys 14 players in the event.

"He was unfortunately playing his teammate in the first round. A very good player, Kevin Seo from Guam. La Hunn was dominating in the first set, up 5-1 and a set point with Kevin serving at 30-40. Then there was a controversy on that point when La Hunn thought he had won the set. But the point was replayed and La Hunn lost the game and the momentum. Kevin started playing stronger and La Hunn never quite recovered mentally. Other than that, he has played really well in all his matches. When his forehand is zinging he's tough to beat," he said.

As for Race, the many time NMSA Coach of the Year and CNMI Sports Hall of Fame inductee finished second in the men's open doubles of the Margaret Court Cup & Roche Series.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jeff Race, left, and doubles partner Chris Lee finished second in the men's doubles open of the Margaret Court Cup & Roche Series.

Partnering with Chris Lees, the eighth seeds dropped a painful 4-6, 6-7, 7-10 decision against top seeds Matthieu Gibert and Harrison Senior.

They advanced following a 4-6, 7-5, 10-7 comeback against Grove Bennett and Thomas Gleeson in the semifinals.

"I was having a great time in that quarterfinal and played really well. I had a great partner and we probably should have won but we probably should have lost the day before so I guess it kind of evened out," said Race.

ED

From page 20

I just defaulted at 365 for those years. After that I started keeping track on apps."

For his advice to those who want to start a streak or are currently in the middle of one, "Don't listen to doctors when they tell you that you need to stop running, and have a good healthcare plan. Injury is an inevitability in this line of hobby. Listen to everything else on what they say though, just not the stop running part. You just need them to patch you up. Run smart. If you're hurt; run your slowest pace and don't run farther than a mile. Listen to your body. This advice doesn't apply to someone who's training as a competitive athlete. For this kind of commitment, you got to choose the run streak or performance results."

His biggest thanks goes to his wife as, "It's due to her grace that I can do this well after getting married. You know what they say: 'happy wife, happy life,' right?"

For Necesito who finished two years, he said he feels "great. I didn't think I'd be able to hold on after the first year. In fact, after the 30-day running challenge, I thought about quitting. But I realized now that if I stopped then everything I had built up after that period in time would be nothing."

The Dandan Middle School teacher said he is aiming for 1,000 days straight of running and has already set the date for Sept. 30, but, "as far as I know, I don't think I have any plans yet to stop."

He added, "Until recently, I was shocked to see the amount of miles I've put in. I ran 1,115 miles for 2023."

As for his advice, he said, "take it slow. You won't see results right away but you know what they say "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." The other thing I want to say is that, you have to be willing to make some sacrifices if you want to make this happen. For the most part, you just need 10-20 minutes out of your entire day."

He then thanked Dela Cruz for inspiring him to continue the streak. "It was under his guidance this year that I was able to accomplish a lot. I want to thank Dr. Ron, coach Robin [Sapong], and Aaron [Pamintuan] and the rest of the 365 running members. I want to thank Run Saipan and the Run Saipan family. They have been encouraging me to continue moving forward," said Necesito.

First tennis tourney of the year this weekend

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

The 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament will be served starting today, Jan. 12, at the American Memorial Park tennis court.

Junior netters will kick off hostilities with age group competition in the boys and girls 18, 16, 14, and 12, while adult tennis commences on Jan. 20 in the men's open and 3.0 and men's doubles 4.0.

Cody Shimizu is the top seed in the boys 18 with Simon Tang as the second seed.

In the boys, 16 Siwoo Lee and June Yu are 1-2 in the group, while Ian Chae is No. 1 in the boys 14 followed by Matthew Hwang.

Cody Park is the top seed in the boys 12 with Minjoon "Michael" Jeon the second seed.

In the girls 18, Serin Chung, Hannah Chae, and Savita Sikkel will duke it out for the tiara, while top seed Hoo Wang and second seed Anne Lee will renew their budding rivalry in the girls 16.

MARK RABAGO

Cody Shimizu is the top seed in the boys 18 of the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament this coming weekend.

Lina Tsukagoshi and Amy Park are seeded No. 1 and No. 2, respectively in the girls 14, while the girls 12 will have Aileen Kim, Scarlett Loken, and Olivia Zhang contesting the title.

For more information on the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament, call (670) 788-7400 or (670) 989-0080.

The Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association is coordinating the tourney.

PIRATES

From page 20

game, the Pirates plundered all the runs they could.

Four runs came in the first inning from the top of the lineup to the fourth batter, then the third inning saw a bombardment at home plate with 10 runs.

Pirates' Peter Sablan went 2-for-3 at-bat, scored three runs, and had one RBI, while cleanup man Audie Maratita put up two-for-two at-bats, two runs, one RBI, and one double.

The second-best Dodgers are not so far behind with a 5-2 record after their win against the Marlins, 16-3, last Wednesday.

The Marlins trickled in their three runs over the course of three innings by way of John Terlaje, Manny Villagomez, and John Taitano, while the Dodgers went big in almost all the innings.

Five scored in the first, then seven in the second for a 12-2 lead. Marlins pitcher Ben Duenas couldn't catch a break as the Dodgers' top of the lineup, which included James Benavente, Derek Aguon, and Robert Bansil, scored three more for a huge 15-3 lead.

By the fourth inning, the Marlins spent all their energy and couldn't make meaningful contact anymore, while the Dodgers' Ed Manibusan scored the final run.

The Reds are at an even 3-3; the Marlins at 2-5; the Blue Jays still 2-4; and the Spartans at 0-5.

Alabama's Nick Saban retires after 7 national titles.

PAGE 20

Saipan Tribune
Sports

NMA recaps 'very successful' 2023.

PAGE 23

Ed, Simon mark 7th, 2nd year of running

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Edward Dela Cruz Jr. is synonymous with running and has now achieved what few have achieved—running for seven years straight. He achieved this on Thursday, Jan. 10, due to the addition of leap years, but started his streak on Jan. 12, 2017.

Another avid runner, Simon Necesito also marked his second year of running last Jan. 4.

Dela Cruz, who is the president of the CNMI's premier running club, Run Saipan, finished 2,555 straight days of running and said that it was just like "any other day."

But, he said, "looking at everyone else finishing their first 365 challenge and looking back, it feels great to be able to do it for this long. A lot of people told me initially to not run everyday. 'It's bad for you,' 'Your knees and back will give out.' Good thing I didn't listen to them. It was always obese people that gave that advice anyway."

With this accomplishment, Dela Cruz is in the "Proficient" level and is ranked No. 367 according to the Streak Runners International/USRSA list on the SRI website. Only five runners are in the "The Hills" level of running for more than 50 years.

The 32-year-old said that his wife, Anastasiia, and son, Alexander, along with his "vibranium-clad conviction" is what keeps him going. "That's my driving force to do this everyday. The will to live," said Dela Cruz.

Will he ever stop running? Dela Cruz said he just wants to run for as long as he can. "If you really have to ask for a number, I want to run until I'm 75. A lot of people act like in their 40s to 50s you're bedridden already. Mr [Changwhan] Jang, Mr Chong Nam Lee, and Dr. Ron Snyder are my greatest inspirations to run well into those ages."

He said he wants to be at the 50+ year rank of streak running. "I want to be the John Sutherland and Robert Kraft of Saipan." Those two runners are actually his inspiration for running. "If they can do it then anyone else can," said Dela Cruz.

Yesterday, Dela Cruz said his run mileage was at 6,099. "I didn't keep good track of my miles my first two years so

See ED on Page 23

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Edward Dela Cruz Jr. has reached seven straight years of running, or 2,555 days, and has logged 6,099 miles as of Wednesday.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Simon Necesito, center, holds a banner of his run streak days as he's joined by friends at the American Memorial Park in celebration of his two years of running.

Pirates, Dodgers continue Masters League domination

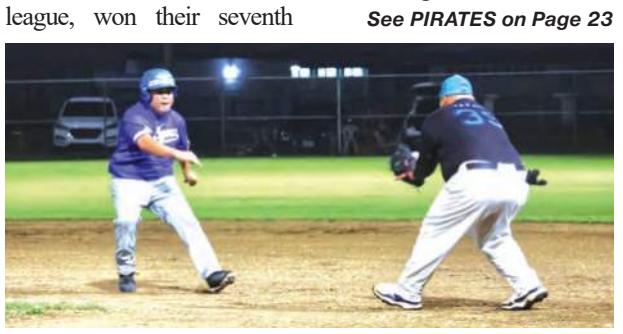
By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Pirates and Dodgers have won consecutive games in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League as they routed their foes last Tuesday and Wednesday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

Pirates, still on top of the league, won their seventh straight after their game against the Reds, 14-1, last Tuesday.

The lone run scored by the Reds came in the first inning by their leadoff batter, Justin Reyes. After that, their bats were silenced by Pirates' pitcher J.J. Laniyo. While the Reds struggled at the plate by going down in order until the last inning of the shortened

See PIRATES on Page 23



LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, a Dodgers baserunner gets caught in a pickoff but reaches safely due to a mishandling of the ball by the first baseman during a game in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Baseball Field.

La Hunn wins consolation match in Australia

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

La Hunn Lam won his boys 14 consolation match in the 2024 Margaret Cup Boys Premier Series in Albury, New South Wales in Australia.

Lam defeated Jackson Roberts, 6-3, 6-0, last Wednesday to salvage a respectable finish in the tournament. Earlier, he got the better of Raice Gibbons, 6-2, 6-2, to advance to the consolation finals.

The 14-year-old started the tournament with a loss to No. 1 seed Junhyuk "Kevin" Seo of Guam, 5-7, 1-6. He, however, rebounded nicely with wins over Alborz Arabzadeh, 6-0, 6-2, and Thomas Gleeson, 6-3, 6-0.

In the Round of 16, Lam beat eighth seed Mitchell Westcott, 6-3, 6-4. He, however, succumbed to Kiran Myutel-Mansur, 2-6, 2-6, and thus came several wins short of a return engagement against Seo.

Yesterday, Lam teamed up with Ethan Wang to finish runner-up in the boys 14 doubles after losing to top seeds Christopher Sakal and Junhyuk Seo, 7-6, 7-5.

Lam and Wang debuted with a 6-4, 6-3 upset of third seeds Samuel Murree and Jackson Roberts. They followed that up with a 6-2, 6-1 victory in the quarterfinals over Smyan Hegde and Eamon Shiel.

In the semifinals, Lam and Wang kept the upset streak rolling by thumping second seeds Ethan Matthews and Oscar Turner, 6-2, 6-2, but saw their campaign end in the loss against Sakal and Seo.

See LA on Page 23

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's La Hunn Lam, right, and Australia's Jackson Roberts pose for a photo during the awards ceremony of the 2024 Margaret Cup Boys Premier Series in Australia.